MOVIE ETIQUETTE:

DISCURSIVE STRUGGLES WITH CO-CONSTRUCTED NORMS OF BEHAVIOR

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Dedication

To my grandmother
for listening to me when I needed support,
guiding me when I needed help,
and loving me through it all.

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ABSTRACT

Perceptions of etiquette, involving expected behavioral norms in movie theaters, clash in discursive struggles of contradictory behaviors. This focus group driven research examines social constructions of space, context, and interaction in movie theaters. Using relational dialectics as a lens, discursive struggles along emergent thematic lines of idealizing movie theater expectations, situating theaters as extensions of one's home, expressing clashes of desires within theaters, transcending theaters into events, and reporting inconsistent behaviors are explored.

Keywords: movie theater etiquette, relational dialectics theory, discursive struggles

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

You dole out $8 to $12 per ticket for the chance to see an anticipated flick. You spend just as much or more at the concession stand to make sure that this experience will be enjoyable and to prevent the risk of hunger or thirst spoiling your good time. You show up early so that you can pick just the right spot, hoping to view the film from the best specific location. You turn off your cell phone, situate your concessions to minimize noise, and ready yourself for a night of cinematic bliss. Then, it begins. The person in front of you starts talking on his cell phone in a raucous manner. The kid behind you starts kicking at your seat. The teenagers to your left begin a display that reminds you why *The Blue Lagoon* (1980) was rated R. There is a family two rows in front of you that continue to exit and return to their seats so often that you feel there should be a turnstile to count all of the back and forth action. There is a baby wailing in the back row. The movie begins and the story you see is not the latest offering from Steven Spielberg, it is the latest in a continual scene in today's local movie theaters. It is a scene in which discursive struggles emerge as interactants attempt to navigate through/between idealizations of acceptable behavior in the public space commonly called the movie theater.

Distractions can come from anyone and anywhere. This became evident when patrons at a movie theater suffered through constant texting by a blonde female in front of them during the New York Film Festival screening of *12 Years a Slave* (2013). When asked to put her Blackberry away, "…the blonde hissed back, 'It's for business…ENSLAVER!'" The patrons later learned that the blonde who disrupted their movie experience was 'the Material Girl' herself, Madonna (Holloway, 2013). Some people are feeling more and more

disenfranchised by experiences in movie theaters—where distractions from interactants continue to make their unwelcome presence (Fuchs, 2013; Zhiwei, 2006). One particular movie theater chain, Alamo Drafthouse Cinema, is so bothered by displays of this kind that they have banned Madonna from stepping foot into any of their theater locations until she issues an apology to moviegoers.

Another example of clashing behaviors occurred when I watched the first installment in a rebooted version of *Star Trek* (2009) at an IMAX theater. My expectations were high. It was the first film I saw in a theater after a long period of movie theater abstinence. An older couple made their way up the tiered stadium and chose two seats to their liking. When they were informed by a theater patron that those seats were taken, the older male waved her off and refused to listen. A few minutes later, the patron returned. This time she was accompanied by her massive boyfriend. An argument loud enough for the whole theater to hear ensued. I almost became witness to a fight that did not involve James T. Kirk or any Klingons. A similar situation occurred when I went with some friends to go watch the movie *Taken* (2008), starring Liam Neeson. Not too long after the movie began, a guy started talking on his cell phone. His kids ran back and forth in the aisle in front of us. A friend asked an usher to intervene, but he did very little to correct the problem. By this point, the distractions became so severe that I was metaphorically 'taken' away from the movie.

With all of these instances of movie theater distractions, moviegoers co-construct varying views on expected behaviors for a movie theater setting. Clashes in public spaces stem from differing perceptions of the concept of movie theater etiquette. An abstract concept such as movie theater etiquette offers a multiplicity of definitions, which presents a problem in the attempt to create standards for movie theater behaviors. In this thesis,

etiquette is understood as desired behaviors within public spaces, rather than a marginalizing form of civility. Miller, Ott, Wu, and Vakili (2010) refer to etiquette as "interpretations" that give "behaviors their redressive values" (p. 410). Desired behaviors within a movie theater continuously shift for each theater patron and often differ from patron to patron. Often, the result of sharing space within such a public institution is a less than desirable experience.

Differences in the opinions of desired guidelines for movie theater behaviors, misconceptions concerning the possibility of static regulations for such behaviors, and contradictions within each utterance concerning the concept result in problems for movie screenings with no clear method for achieving a resolution. While the implications of clashes of behaviors within movie theaters may seem trivial, the scene acts as a microcosm of larger cultural battles concerning behaviors in public spaces. The stories concerning clashes within theaters range from minor instances of grievances to major tragedies that make national headlines (Owens & Oliver, 1991; Robles, 2014). All too often, a moviegoer will experience a situation in which an undesirable outcome for a movie theater screening will arise when interactants within the theater behave in ways that are not desired by other moviegoers. Other instances result in more severe disturbances in which moviegoers might not ever leave the theater, as a result of violence stemming from disagreements over desired behaviors (Robles, 2014). The implications of these disputes revolve around perceptions of etiquette, which can never be held down by one static meaning.

Etiquette, itself as a construct, connotes that certain behaviors should be favored while others are marginalized in a way that involves power structures and popular discourses. This socially constructed notion of etiquette is utilized to standardize behaviors in public spaces, yet too many contradictions make such an endeavor impractical. The assumption that

static guidelines exist and should be enforced often results in disputes within movie theaters. A better understanding of what takes place when people congregate together within the enclosed spaces of a movie theater can help provide a starting place in the daunting task of promoting change within the discourses concerning desired behaviors within theaters. This could possibly help reduce instances that result in extreme situations due to disagreements as to what constitutes preferred behaviors.

Perceptions of movie theater etiquette create the assumption that a concrete construction of guidelines regulates patrons within a movie theater without allowing for exceptions, irregularities, or breaks. This type of notion develops through socially understood utterances that are produced from the culture at hand. A moviegoer might suspect that each utterance on the topic of movie theater etiquette is only another dollop of glue holding together the cohesive, static foundation of a concept that always holds true all of the time. Yet, each temporal spatial, or *chronotopic*, performance within a theater involves different assemblages of moviegoers, different contexts surrounding the screening, and multiple other factors that give unique meanings to each particular event (Bakhtin, 1981a, p. 84). A patron never enters a movie screening with the same gathering of moviegoers after the initial occurrence. Each screening contains a different cast of characters within the aisles of the theater. If one set of standards is co-constructed when one assemblage comes together to enjoy a movie, it is very unlikely that the same set of standards will hold for a new collection of moviegoers. There are too many factors that prevent a screening from being replicated time and time again. A moviegoer brings different emotional states each time a trip to the cinemaplex is made. The movie is different. The temperature inside of the theater changes and will not be exactly identical to that of a previous screening. Ultimately, each moviegoer

brings past ideas, conversations, and experiences to the theater that simultaneously contain echoes of past experiences common to all within the same structure while also being characterized by various degrees of contradictions (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). A dynamic interplay of similarity and difference is at play when interactants assemble at the movie theater.

Interactants within the confined space of a movie theater exist as part of a system. Each collection is further divided into subsystems (Watzlawick, Bavelas, & Jackson, 1967). However, the collective whole also exists within a larger environment. Social constructions within the environment help guide the interactants when communicating. While each party, when considered as separate from the other relating parties, possesses unique qualities, every member of the larger environment also shares common understandings. These common understandings develop in the utterances spoken by members of the environment, both in the distal (i.e., away from) past and the more recent proximal (i.e., close to) timespan. Such utterances, "circulating in the culture at large," (Baxter, 2011, p. 50) exist in the distal already-spoken link of Bakhtin's utterance chain. Discourses spoken so repeatedly become habituated, creating an illusion of permanence that circulates within the environment. The reified discourses take on the status of cultural taken-for-granted understandings. These common understandings are shared by the patrons within a movie theater; therefore, when moviegoers gather together and interpret conceptions of desired behaviors within a movie theater, they share certain commonalities. Interactants share these commonly held notions of movie theater etiquette, in which they perceive that everyone knows which behaviors are desired within a confined public space. They, therefore, feel that everybody ought to behave in these favored ways. Thus, certain preferences of movie theater behaviors become centered

in the discursive struggles over desired behaviors within movie theaters. Yet, contradictions also exist within the utterances of movie theater etiquette.

The participants of a movie theater screening are all situated within the same environment, the same culture at large. However, while participants of the same environment share common experiences, each moviegoer also comes from smaller systems that possess unique experiences shared only by the members of that particular culture. For instance, one movie theater patron might come from a small, rural location where movie theater experiences are very different from the experiences others might hold if they come from a larger metropolis. Another division may exist if certain participants are a part of cultures where a sense of community and expressiveness is centered over seclusion, whereas others might belong to cultures where autonomy and nonexpression are favored. The centering of such values, stemming from prior experiences with/in one's culture, plays an important role in the development of perceptions of movie theater behavior preferences. These differences may lead to contradictions within the dialogue concerning all matters, even those involving desired behaviors within a movie theater.

Baxter (2011) reminds us that, "dialogue is counterpoint among multiple competing discourses, or systems of meaning" (p. 32). Therefore, relating parties certainly share commonalities in the dialogue over desired movie theater behaviors. However, contradictions are also simultaneously present. The condition of patrons simultaneously sharing commonalities and possessing contradictions about behaviors within the public space of a cinemaplex is the result of a dynamic interplay of competing discourses (Baxter, 2011). This creates problems for moviegoers and corporate executives of theater chains, both of whom

might desire static guidelines for movie theater behaviors. An aspiration such as this is made difficult by the presence of a dynamic interplay between competing discourses.

This dynamic interplay between two perceived opposites creates a dialectical tension in which behaviors are not static. They are constantly shifting, seeking change in a process that relies on the paradox of simultaneous contradictions. Thus, while one patron in a theater might desire seclusion within this theater to obtain the perks of a noise-free experience, this same patron might also desire a communal inclusion in which an event-like feel to the moviegoing experience is obtained. This produces questions about differences in perceptions of movie theater etiquette, differences in behaviors based on these perceived norms of theater etiquette, and feelings toward behaviors of others in movie theater settings. Baxter's (2011) relational dialectics theory helps us examine discourses among interactants in movie theaters. The primary goal of this study is to understand the contradictions or discursive struggles that emerge in attitudes and behaviors when interactants assemble in the public setting of a movie theater through the use as Baxter's (2011) relational dialectics theory as a guiding framework.

After this initial introductory section, Chapter 2 will continue with a review of literature concerning constructions of etiquette and theoretical considerations that provide new understandings for the problem of countering behaviors. In this chapter of my thesis, I will consider the problem of discursive struggles in movie theaters. I begin by recounting the concern of moviegoers and theater chain corporations. I examine the issues of grievances, arguments, and violence in an attempt to draw attention to problems that emerge when countering behaviors create disagreements. I continue with research of movie theater dilemmas, followed by a consideration of theories concerning relating parties and public

spaces. I will exemplify how behaviors are often qualities of interactants situated in environments where certain discourses struggle against others. I use Baxter's (2011) relational dialectics theory as a lens through which to better understand the discursive struggles present in the utterances about behaviors within a movie theater. I also use social constructionism as a framework through which conceptions of etiquette can be understood as an extension of popular discourses within society that become reified to the point of crystallization (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). This theoretical perspective provides a pathway to understand these habituated patterns as merely socially constructed, rather than naturally existing. I provide theoretical considerations and research concerning behaviors during movie theater screenings to create a foundation upon which to build the remaining chapters.

In Chapter 3, I detail the methodological framework of my thesis. In Chapter 3, I will describe focus groups: the ethical issues concerning the data, the procedures used in order to gather and analyze the data, and the reasons for choosing the method. My analysis of focus groups provides the strengths and benefits of this research method. This portion of the thesis supplies a rationale for focus groups, describing it as the most favorable method for this particular type of study. I evaluate ethical considerations of focus groups, as I explore issues of participant consent, confidentiality, and the importance of institutional review boards (IRBs) to further ensure participant protection and to respect "guidelines for the use and treatment of human subjects" (Bach, 2005, p. 266). I then discuss the interpretive procedures used for the study at length to provide a better understanding of the methods used for analyzing the data. My overview of the method describes in detail the practices used for recording the conversations that occurred in each focus group setting, the process of transcribing the audio recordings, the coding of the data, and the ways in which themes were

located within the data. The 11 focus groups consisted of 77 participants, 44 females and 33 males. Participation was voluntary for this IRB approved study, which consisted of undergraduate and graduate students from a mid-sized university in the Southwestern United States. The overview of the methods used to collect, analyze, and interpret the data provides insight into how I was able to interpret new meanings concerning the discursive struggles of movie theater behaviors using the findings that were yielded from the utterances shared in the focus group discussions.

In Chapter 4, I report the findings that emerged from within the focus group discussion data. In essence, the utterances are displayed to supply examples of discursive struggles regarding behaviors in movie theaters. The utterances present in this portion of the thesis showcase varying idealizations of movie theater behaviors and demonstrate how such idealizations shift from screening to screening and from person to person. I examine five emergent themes and provide evidence to support the implications of each theme as a way of providing an analysis of the data. I examine how moviegoers expect screenings to be ideal. I demonstrate how moviegoers tend to situate the theater as an extension of one's home. I examine a further theme to inform how patrons express clashing desires when situated in a public space, often disagreeing on which behaviors should be centered and which should be decentered. The next theme is transcendence of a movie theater screening into an epic event. Finally, I provide examples of incongruent practices to support the theme of inconsistent behaviors within movie theaters. I indicate how often what moviegoers desire concerning the behaviors of others within a movie theater is different from the behaviors enacted by those same moviegoers. A dialectical polyvalence emerges in such situations where inconsistencies are displayed. The utterances of participants from the focus groups ultimately illustrate how

each situated screening is different from the next screening and how inconsistent idealizations lead to struggles within the discourse surrounding behaviors in movie theaters.

In the final chapter, Chapter 5, I offer a discussion of the findings and the implications of the discursive struggles that emerged from the focus group discussions. I give consideration to what the findings may mean in the overall discussion of desired behaviors for movie theater screenings. I conclude the study by implicating how Baxter's (2011) relational dialectics theory can be utilized to better understand the shifting utterances inherent in discussions of movie theater behavior preferences. The data that emerged from the focus group discussions presents discursive struggles within the discourse of movie theater preferences, which exemplifies how such competing discourses make a concrete notion of etiquette improbable. Next, I examine the limitations of the study. Following considerations of limitations, I present possibilities for future research. Overall, I use the conclusion to contemplate the significance of my study to suggest how understanding discursive struggles within the utterances of movie theater idealizations can serve as a starting point for creating change that might improve discursive struggles in other public spaces within our society.

Summary

Each trip to the movie theater brings about a new drama. The drama on the screen, however, is often imitated in the aisles of the theater. Patrons negotiate with/between notions of behavioral guidelines, in which interactants must adhere to standards of etiquette and notions of freedom, as each autonomous interactant creates an individualized set of standards. These seemingly contradictory notions are not polar opposites. Ffrench (2013) expressed the views of Sartre when stressing that it "plays with a contrast between a 'civilisation' artificially perpetuated beyond its time as the pure form of ritual, and

'barbarism' as the absence of ritual" (pp. 38-39). Additionally, Baxter (2011) notes the interdependence of these discursive struggles by stating "the interplay of competing discourses [is] where the action sits—the interplay of discourses are how meanings are made" (p. 18). The interplay of these discursive struggles—the struggles between seclusion and inclusion, autonomy and connection, and disclosure and nondisclosure—within the movie theater often leads to an environment in which the negotiation of meanings is a divisive act. These struggles create difficulty in constructing a standard definition of movie theater etiquette. Perhaps a static construction of idealized behaviors is not sensible, yet moviegoers possess strong desires for what a movie screening should entail.

A trip to the movie theater is often thought of as a break from the monotony of life or as a way to escape harsh experiences that might give people a need for some sort of release. The space of the movie theater is structured as the perfect place to escape those experiences. Moviegoers seek a space that offers total freedom while enjoying a movie, yet such a space consists of restrictions to prevent any disruptions from taking away from a desirable movie theater experience. These discursive struggles concerning idealized behaviors within a movie theater unfortunately may result in more conflict in the aisles of the movie theater than in the feature film on the screen.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Audiences have gravitated toward the pageantry, performance, and exhibition as far back as ancient civilizations. From competitions in which gladiators struggled against unfavorable odds (Lauer, 2004; Oates, 2007; Quinn, 1984) to reality shows that present dramatized pseudorealities for voyeuristic spectators to feast upon (Boylorn, 2008; Squires, 2008; Tavener, 2000), viewers have marveled at a diverse offering of entertainment throughout multiple periods of time. The motion picture, originally displayed in Kinetoscopes in penny arcades, introduced a new spectacle for entertainment-seeking audiences shortly before the beginning of the twentieth century (Boller, Jr. & Davis, 1987). Moviegoers valued this spectacle for entertainment purposes, as it allowed them to gaze at the forms that came to life on the screen (Mulvey, 1989). Further making their mark with the changeover from Kinetoscopes to nickelodeons, cinematic screenings allowed audiences the chance to witness the transcendence of still images to live-action serials. This was no small feat, pioneers such as Thomas Edison (Singer, 1988), Edwin S. Porter (Stevens, 2006), and George Albert Smith (Gray, 1998) helped take feature films from panning cameras to moving pictures. Once cinema progressed, the latest features at the local movie theater grew in popularity and became an alternative form of entertainment, which altered the landscape of social activities.

At the onset of the new fascination with motion pictures, early silent film stars, such as Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton, Lillian Gish, Clara Bow, and Douglas Fairbanks, propelled the popularity of film (Jewell, 2007). Featuring stars from the mystical location of Hollywoodland, motion pictures gave rise to this modern form of spectacle. *The Jazz Singer*,

released in 1927 and produced by Warner Brothers, introduced sound to feature films (Johnston, 2011). Accurately predicting the future of motion pictures, Al Jolson declared to moviegoers, "you ain't heard nothin' yet" (Boller, Jr. & Davis, 1987, p. 47). Thus began "the Golden Age of Hollywood," which transformed Cary Grant, Jimmy Stewart, Clark Gable, Humphrey Bogart, and Katharine Hepburn into Hollywood movie stars. As the fascination with Hollywood grew, the crowds in the local movie houses increased. The 1970s brought about an economic boom and films such as *Jaws* (1975) and *Star Wars* (1977) helped inspire a term called the *blockbuster*—a movie noted for its massive financial success compared to other less successful films of the past (Bourke et al., 2003). As the decades passed and movie theaters became increasingly crowded, patrons found themselves collected in public spaces where a paradox of behaviors reminiscent of autonomous practices and those of connections with multiple interactants simultaneously emerged. Often, these contradictory behaviors lead to dissatisfaction during movie theater screenings (Fuchs, 2013; Zhiwei, 2006). The excitement of watching/viewing an anticipated movie was often met with the reluctance to experience a clash of contradictory behaviors within the movie house.

Following this overview of the history of movie theaters, this chapter continues with a nod to social construction. Social construction reminds us that concepts thought to be natural are "not fixed and inevitable," but rather "the product of historical events, social forces, and ideology" (Hacking, 1999, p. 2). Notions of preferred behaviors for movie theater screenings fall under the umbrella of socially constructed ideologies. Following the examination of how the concept of movie theater etiquette is socially constructed, I continue the chapter by contemplating how interactants who collect together in public spaces tend to foster standards for behaviors. These preferred behaviors, however, become problematic, which is

demonstrated in the subsequent sections of this chapter. In these sections, I investigate how contradictory behaviors are always simultaneously at work, constantly shifting due to the interplay of discursive struggles. Interactants struggle with similarity and difference simultaneously when in public spaces. They make choices on whether to behave according to perceptions of public expectations or whether to satisfy autonomous desires. I then examine relational dialectics theory in the next section, as I discuss the basic tenets of the theory. I conclude by analyzing the current situation with movie theaters and how discursive struggles brought upon by collective interactants create dilemmas for both the movie theater chains and the moviegoing patrons who assemble for each screening.

Social Constructing Idealized Behaviors in Theaters: Centripetal-Centrifugal Struggles

People collect together in multiple locations within society. Extant research has discussed the public behaviors and satisfaction of interactants within work environments (O'Brien, 2014; Oostendorp & Jones, 2015), learning facilities (Myers, Goodboy, & Members of Comm 600, 2014; Sidelinger, Bolen, Frisby, & McMullen, 2011), religious institutions (McPhee & Corman, 1995; Taylor, 1997), and sports organizations (Bodet & Bernache-Assollant, 2011; Turman, 2006). Public presentations, resulting in expressed behaviors, are inherent in social gatherings. Perceptions of behaviors range, often situated at extreme levels of symmetry and incongruity. Although perceptions seem to situate at opposite ends of the spectrum, "dialectical contradictions are not represented well with simple, binary oppositions" (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996, p. 43). Therefore, it is more productive to perceive contradictory behaviors "as complex, overlapping domains of centrifugal forces juxtaposed with centripetal forces" (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996, p. 44). Baxter (2011) stated, "the term centripetal refers to moving toward centralization or the

center, whereas the term centrifugal refers to the opposite dynamic of moving away from the center toward the margins" (p. 123). In other words, the centripetal margins include those discourses about behaviors that hold a degree of favor, and are regarded as normal through social influence. In contrast, the centrifugal margins include those behaviors that are socially construed as nonnormative and unfavorable. These meanings, constructed from the interplay of competing discourses through a process referred to by Baxter (2011) as communication praxis, position certain behaviors as positive while positioning other behaviors in the margins. Both favored and marginalized behaviors are juxtaposed to produce these meanings. Through social influence, behaviors are marked as either good or bad. Yet, such rigid definitions come with complications. Behaviors shift and meanings change, as social constructions of idealized behaviors do not solidify into concrete formulations. This creates problems for any attempt to gratify fellow interactants when altering behaviors toward public acceptance. Specifically, it signals a tension that must be addressed when contemplating the current situation with contradictory behaviors within movie theaters.

Preferred models of behavior in public spaces are socially constructed as normative acts in ways that attempt to guide interactants toward an idealized form of participation. Normative acts, or norms, are defined as socially influenced expectations that govern behaviors (Butler, 1990). Norms are understood as typical, not irregular. Norms are social constructions. Berger and Luckmann (1967) refer to a social construction "as a given reality that, like nature, is opaque in places" (p. 59). They add that "the reality of everyday life is taken for granted as reality." So habitualized are the practices, such as the idea of consensual behaviors within movie theaters, that there becomes a "suspension of doubt…so firm that to abandon it" would require extraordinary modifications (p. 23). This theoretical stance, in

which phenomena are viewed as socially constructed, requires a process of externalization, objectivation, and internalization.

Externalization entails institutions that gain a status as certain, absolute, and "undeniable facts" through a social process, in which the influence of societal relationships create meanings for particular phenomena (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, p. 60). Socially produced constructs become externalized in a way that positions them as real; thus, objectivation follows. In this subsequent stage, humans experience the constructed phenomena as natural realities. "The paradox that man [sic] is capable of producing a world that he [sic] then experiences as something other than a human product" is what Berger and Luckmann (1967) refer to as a "continuing dialectical process" (p. 61). They reiterate that "the relationship between man, the producer, and the social world, his product, is and remains a dialectical one" (p. 61). Therefore, the final step of internalization completes the process when this socially constructed world is internalized within the interactant and the transition from socially produced to naturally realized is complete. Similarly, communication praxis involves a process in which the creator becomes influenced by the creation in a dialectical sense. Rawlins (1992) states, "the concept of praxis describes the human communicator as an ongoing producer and product of his or her choices within an encompassing cultural matrix" (pp. 7-8). Under this premise, phenomenon such as time, sexuality, science, and human emotions are viewed as products of social influence (Gergen, 2009). Idealizations of a movie theater can be viewed with the same characteristics of these other phenomenon, which are all perceived to be social constructions of reality.

Berger and Luckmann (1967) extend the theoretical assertion when stating that "compared to the reality of everyday life, other realities appear as finite provinces of

meaning, enclaves within the paramount reality marked by circumscribed meanings and modes of experience" (p. 25). In contemplation of forms of play, such as an experience at a theater, they express that:

> The theater provides an excellent illustration on such playing on the part of adults. The transition between realities is marked by the rising and falling of the curtain. As the curtain rises, the spectator is "transported to another world," with its own meanings and an order that may or may not have much to do with the order of everyday life. As the curtain falls, the spectator "returns to reality," that is, to the paramount reality of everyday life by comparison with which the reality presented on the stage now appears tenuous and ephemeral, however vivid the presentation may have been a few moments previously. (p. 25)

While the image on the screen is only imagined as real for a few fleeting moments, the breaks from these moments of play present an interruption from the dreamlike to the socially constructed reality of everyday life. The behaviors in the movie theater represent real transgressions, which resituate the moviegoer into a location that is perceived to be natural or authentic. Behaviors are often viewed upon as either idealized or undesirable. The interactants within a theater screening work together through a continual process to construct a framework for others to follow when attempting to modify their behaviors to that of one another's expectations.

Copresence in Public Spaces

> All the world's a stage,
> And all the men and women merely players;
> They have their exits and their entrances,
> And one man in his time plays many parts
> (Shakespeare, 2009, 2.7.139-142)

Even when interactants favor marginalized behaviors, such as those within a movie theater, it is often difficult to swim against the tide. When further articulating social construction, Gergen (2009) states, "there is nothing in the mind that is not first in society" (p. 92). The members of a society construct guidelines for idealized behaviors, one that is never static, but one that outlines which behaviors are preferred and which are deemed unacceptable. These social idealizations are perceived to be normal procedures for behavior, or social norms that ought to be followed. Social norms designate implied rules of behavior, so when individuals participate in the "experiencing of others" through a *copresence* within a confined space, there is usually a socially constructed implication to adjust one's behavior to satisfy social norms (Goffman, 1963a, p. 17). Zhao (2003) refers to *copresence* as a social presence with others in a shared environment. In a setting comprised of multiple interactants, social norms help create regulated spaces and mechanistic guidelines that guide behaviors during the performance of daily activities. A movie theater is an example of such a public space, one that is thought to benefit from a consensual philosophy on behavioral norms.

Norms materialize through social influence and suggest behaviors with connotations of ought or should. Norms differ from etiquette in that they refer to expectations, whereas etiquette refers to the practice of adjusting behaviors to satisfy these expectations. Social norms, suggestions about how individuals typically behave socially in public, include patterns of group behavior (Burchell, Rettie, & Patel, 2013). Cialdini, Reno, and Kallgren (1990) refer to judgments about the approval of conduct when defining the injunctive meaning of norms. Descriptive norms focus on the actualization of what is done in contrast to the belief of what should be done. Injunctive norms are socially embedded and sanctioned.

The inherent interplay of contradictions, such as the competition between descriptive and injunctive norms, is similar to the contradictions theorized by Baxter and Montgomery (1996) in postulating relational dialectics theory. Cialdini et al. (1990) also stress that while norms create procedures for the actualization of idealized behaviors within society, they are not always followed. Many alternate on choices of whether to abide by a set standard of normative behavior. While most tend to behave accordingly to the set norms in place, there are inevitable transgressions that break these desired expectations of behavior. If these statements by Cialdini et al. (1990) hold true, then it might be reason to believe that patrons in a movie theater setting will behave according to norms they see performed rather than norms they feel placed upon them. With this assumption in mind, the present research seeks a better understanding of how interactants perceive idealizations of movie theater behaviors, of how they behave according to these perceptions, and how they view others whose behaviors differ from their perceived standards of behavior. To investigate this query, I pose the following research question:

RQ 1: Does one's perceptions about movie theater idealizations contradict one's personal behaviors?

To Be(have) or Not to Be(have)

Johnson, Ream, Dunlap, and Sifaneck (2008) stressed that an integral part of order exists in the social norms perpetuated by the masses in the functionality of public systems. According to this understanding, social norms are described as behavioral expectations placed upon members within a public setting. Zhiwei (2006) further positioned expected norms of behavior, in relation to manners and etiquette, as being enforced by societal customs and group pressure. Civic norms can be challenged whenever opinions, about what

type of behavior is acceptable in a public space, clash with differing opinions. If such behaviors inhibit freedoms, they can lead to tensions in a setting built upon socially constructed values typical of those delegated to the movie theater.

When behaviors differ from public expectations, they can be considered as slight inconveniences or harmful. Amiot, Sansfacon, and Louis (2013) address this issue by contemplating the rationale for harmful behaviors. Harmful behaviors, those that break from idealizations of social rules, are thought to result in consequences. The threat of consequences reinforces the importance of acclimating to societal demands. However, contestations over perceptions about whether a behavior is harmful or not is dependent upon a temporal outlook. Justifications can be constructed to validate behaviors and thus, the labeling of behaviors as normative or harmful varies. In addition, Butler (2004) stresses that:

> The point is not to apply social norms to lived social instances, to order and define them (as Foucault has criticized), nor is it to find justificatory mechanisms for the grounding of social norms that are extra-social (even as they operate under the name of the social). (p. 36)

Therefore, it might be near impossible to agree on a consensus of normative values of behavior if disagreements exist between members of the group in which behaviors are ideal and which are less than desirable. In addition, the event, the scene, or the experience might be viewed positively by some while others view it negatively.

Differing perceptions might allow for certain members to break from the normative constitution of guidelines in a setting, such as a movie theater, while pressuring others to abide by implied regulations. While behaviors regarding the response to perceived norms of etiquette differ, behaviors concerning reactions to perceived breaks in etiquette might also

vary in the public space presented by a movie theater. In this study, I seek to better understand dialectical tensions that emerge in the public space of a movie theater by uncovering and interpreting discursive struggles within the discussion of participants in a focus group. Understanding that discursive struggles create shifting tendencies, I pose the following research question:

> *RQ 2*: Do moviegoers expect idealized behaviors from others while not behaving according to the same idealized expectations?

Toward an Interplay of Similarity and Difference

A traditional assumption in interpersonal communication situates individuals as isolated actors that are affected by the actions of others (Gergen, 2009; Prinz, Forsterling, & Hauf, 2005). A solitary act by one will cause a certain reaction from another interactant. Discrepancies are inherent in communication as often one interactant possesses more knowledge than the other, even if such an imbalance of information is not realized by one of the two interactants. Watzlawick, Bavelas, and Jackson (1967) note, "we typically observe in these cases of discrepant punctuation a conflict about what is cause and what is effect" (p. 76). Such understandings view dialogue, relationships, and interaction as a binary mode of communication. This interpretation of human communication supports the premise that dialogue goes back and forth between two distinct individuals, each possessing a human mind that is not influenced by social constructions. The individual, according to this assumption, exists distinctly within the mind. These individualistic minds can be thought of as solitary containers, ready to provide feedback for any output that is received from another interactant. Disputing this notion of binary communication between two distinct individuals, Baxter and Montgomery (1996) argue that "social life cannot be reduced to the simplicity of

a single binary opposition; interaction is a cacophony of dialogic voices as they are constituted in concrete contexts" (p. 30). The tenets of relational dialectics theory differ from viewpoints that perceive individuals as actors reacting to utterances from others.

Goffman (1959) believed that individuals concocted presentations in order to correspond with social constructions of idealized behaviors. He positioned an individual as an autonomous body seeking to follow societal expectations and revealed that:

> While in the presence of others, the individual typically infuses his activity with signs which dramatically highlight and portray confirmatory facts that might otherwise remain unapparent or obscure. For if the individual's activity is to become significant to others, he must mobilize his activity so that it will express during the interaction what he wishes to convey. (p. 30)

While this belief certainly agrees with the notion that moviegoers often seek to display favored behaviors when attempting to adhere to social expectations, it also neglects to include a rationale for behaviors that are deviant. Instead of viewing interactants as merely skilled actors who respond to utterances from others, a dialogic understanding offers a multiplicity of voices to be present in a single utterance. In this way, an utterance is not merely the spoken message of one individual in one moment of time. Baxter (2004) notes that according to Bakhtin, "social life was constituted discursively in its language-in-use, its utterances" (p. 184). An utterance, it is important to clearly understand, is a social process, not the practice of an autonomous interactant. No utterance is ever just one person talking to another, neglecting to be inclusive of social discourses within the environment, both proximal and distant. Relational dialectics theory moves from binary contradictions toward

an interplay of similarity and difference, toward an interplay of discursive struggles within/between interactants and their cultures.

Dialogism: From Bakhtin to Baxter

Baxter (2004) began her studies with an interest in opposition heuristics. This interest, while possessing qualities of dualism, eventually led her to dialogism after a colleague insisted that she read the theoretical works of Mikhail Bakhtin. Bakhtin, a Russian theorist noted for the theory of dialogism, began his work after undertaking an interest in the perceived competing discourses within the genre of the novel. The novel, according to Bakhtin, was rich in dialogism in that it contained a multiplicity of clashing viewpoints. Thus, Bakhtin was concerned with the interplay of competing discourses that made it objectionable to view dialogue as simply dualistic. Bakhtin (1981b) states that:

> The importance of struggling with another's discourse, its influence in the history of an individual's coming to ideological consciousness, is enormous. One's own discourse and one's own voice, although born of another or dynamically stimulated by another, will sooner or later begin to liberate themselves from the authority of the other's discourse. This process is made more complex by the fact that a variety of alien voices enter into the struggle for influence within an individual's consciousness (just as they struggle with one another in surrounding social reality). (p. 348)

This is synonymous with the notion of the utterance chain, a concept Baxter developed after reading the works of Bakhtin. For within the link of the utterance chain, referred to as the distal already-spoken link, utterances from the culture at large can always be found within present utterances. Again, it is asserted that no voice carries only a quality of singularity within its message. Instead, each utterance carries utterances from previous conversations

from the culture at large, from past conversations with more proximal relationships, and from both proximal and distal not-yet-spoken utterances that involve an anticipated response from what Bakhtin refers to as the superaddressee (Bakhtin, 1986). Baxter extended Bakhtin's notion of the utterance into the guiding framework for her lifetime work, relational dialectics theory.

An utterance, again, is not the action of an autonomous interactant, but rather a social process. To Bakhtin, social influence was paramount to an understanding of the utterance. In agreement with social constructionism, dialogic scholars believe "construction happens socially, between the communicators, as they participate in the construction of social worlds" (Baxter, 2011, p. 43). Baxter altered minor understandings of Bakhtin's dialogism in order to construct her theory of relational dialectics. Baxter (2011) makes it clear,

> Whereas Bakhtin focused his intellectual energy on language, culture, and the novel, relational dialectics theory takes the core concepts and principles of dialogism in a different direction, that of understanding how communication makes meaning in the everyday prosaics of relating. (p. 44)

Baxter, more concerned with interpersonal and family communication than the study of the genre of the novel, made relationships paramount in her usage of dialogism. Thus, the transition from dialogism to dialectics was necessary in order to interpret the process of relating, a process that allows an understanding of relationships between/among interactants in a movie theater setting.

This thesis, while incorporating much of Baxter's work in relation to relational dialectics theory, focuses primarily on Baxter's later articulation of the theory. The original articulation of the theory held contradictions as the primary consideration when analyzing

dialogue. In what Baxter (2004) refers to as RDT 2.0 (2011), the newer articulation differs from the original in that it "positions the several meanings of 'dialogue' with more or less equal footing-dialogue as centripetal-centrifugal flux, dialogue as utterance, dialogue as aesthetic moment, dialogue as a critical sensibility" (p. 188). Therefore, while I acknowledge the importance of the original articulation of relational dialectics theory, my usage of relational dialectics theory refers to the later articulation (RDT 2.0) introduced by Baxter (2011).

Popcorn, Dialectics, and Behaviors in Theaters

A trip to the local movie theater is usually considered to be an excursion, a fun departure from the everyday routine, an exciting experience. This makes us question the notion of an experience. The experience is never undisputable. There are just too many multiplicities of opinion to allow for an absolute analysis of an experience. Adams (2009) contemplates experience in terms of representation and ponders the "what ifs" of any form of experience through representation. This experience can be molded to one's needs and one's viewpoints, yet it cannot be uncontested. With so many differences of opinions about what should be allowed and what should not, there are sure to be many consequences seen in public spaces when varying viewpoints on social etiquette emerge. This can only lead to battles about the criteria for normative behavior, and such battles will take place in several different spaces.

The movie theater presents a public space where battles concerning social etiquette play out. Distractions, such as cell phone usage, texting, loud noises, cries from infants, talking, and audible chewing, are causing disputes between the moviegoers in the audience that sometimes only result in an unpleasant experience. However, sometimes disputes lead to

more severe situations. Fuchs (2013) revealed how a Vice President of Marketing from the Cinemark theater chain divulged that one of the biggest complaints from customers about movie theaters is the constant texting from others during a screening. The texting is a break from perceived social norms, which are thought to be publically expected forms of behavior. Yet, with so many insisting that others comply with perceived social norms, there is still a large group guilty of breaking these expectations in social places.

Certain acts within a movie theater understandably present a danger for the safety of others such as shouting "fire" within a crowded theater (Herbeck, 2009). However, arguments can be made for/against other acts within a movie theater. While popular consensus positions noise within a theater as undesirable, instances of noise within theaters is preferred in other situations. The spectrum of dissatisfaction toward marginalized behaviors within a movie theater ranges from mild annoyance to extreme aversion. Often, moviegoers express a desire not to return to the theater (William, 1994). Movie theater companies have had to endure economic losses due to the rise of other technological alternatives that provide screenings within one's home such as premium subscriptions (Lafayette, 2014) and on-demand services (Giuffre, 2014). Yet, desire seems to bring the moviegoer back to the movie theater. As Mayne (2002), stresses, "the Lacanian notion of desire is a continuous process whereby desires are never satisfied, thus ensuring an economy of desire, which reinforces, in its turn, the wish to return to the cinema again and again" (p. 23). If patrons keep returning to the theater, instances where contradictory behaviors create disagreements within the aisles are sure to continue.

A diachronic separation is characterized by "a shift in which discourse is centered and which discourse is marginalized" (Baxter, 2011, p. 127). Two diachronic practices vary on

separations between time and situations. Spiraling inversion involves "a back and forth pattern over time in the dominance of first one discourse and then another," whereas segmentation "manifests a similar ebb and flow over time, but the basis of inversion is not time, per se, but rather a topical or activity domain" (p. 127). When considering this understanding, while at the same time contemplating the notion of idealized movie theater behaviors, moviegoers suggest that certain behaviors are idealized, yet they will behave in ways that contradict these assertions. In addition, alternate behaviors might be favored in alternate situations. Rawlins (1992) claims, "contradictions and dialectical tensions are central features of a dialectical analysis" and that "these antagonistic yet interdependent aspects of communication…form the pulse of routine as well as volatile and transitional moments" (p. 7). An example of this type of ebb and flow would include situations in which audible mutterings by a patron within the theater that might usually be construed as disruptive might instead be welcome if such a remark added meaning to the dialogue/action in the movie. A funny comment when moviegoers least expect it might be an example of a welcome disruption that would normally be decentered in a diachronic separation of movie theater behaviors. With competing discourses concerning movie theater idealizations under each temporal/spatial circumstance, I pose the following research question:

RQ 3: Do idealizations of movie theater behaviors remain the same for every temporal/spatial situation?

Transformational Possibilities

Discursive struggles allow for shifting preferences in movie theater desires. Baxter (2011) offers transformational possibilities when claiming that, on occasion, instances of integration and calibration create new meanings for the discursive struggles of movie theater

preferences. Integration occurs through hybridization, or "a process of mixing two or more distinct discourses to create a new meaning" (p. 139). In this type of scenario, the desire for nonexpression would mix with a desire for expression during a movie theater screening. Yet, these two competing discourses would only mix. A mixture of competing discourses seems to occur when moviegoers collect for a cult classic film, specifically on anticipated premieres. When audiences assemble in costumes to see a blockbuster such as *Star Wars* (1977), *The Avengers* (2012), or *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring* (2001), they often arrive with an immense anticipation and a vast amount of excitement. The event-like feel to the screening allows for moviegoers to desire a mixture of nonexpression and expression. Nonexpression would occur during the pivotal points of the movie when silence from the audience would be desired. Expression would be favored during times of vocal participation such as moments in which a dramatic scene caused a communal reaction. In these instances, expression and nonexpression mix together in order to create new meanings for the moviegoing experience.

A second transformational possibility involves recalibration. Recalibration occurs through the aesthetic moment (Bakhtin, 1990). The aesthetic moment "involves the interpenetration of discourses in such a way that each meaning system is profoundly reconstructed" (Baxter, 2011, p. 139). The two competing discourses shift from a messy struggle toward wholeness in a process that produces a new entity altogether (Bolen, 2014). Aesthetic moments are understood through answerability, an "act of mutual authoring" (Baxter, 2011, p. 27). Answerability involves a process in which parties complete one another (Baxter & DeGooyer, 2001; Bakhtin, 1990). Aesthetic moments are reminiscent of the innovative advancement in which custom-built theaters show 4D screenings. Most

screenings involve 2-dimensional screens, existing on a plane. Three-dimensional screenings, or 3D movies, were a technological advancement in which the picture appeared to go beyond a 2-dimensional plane. 4D is a step beyond 3-dimensional technology. Instead of relying only on 3D technology, such screenings "include vibration, air jets, water sprays, and leg and back ticklers" (Kwon, Kim, Chung, Ko, & Lee, 2015, p. 164). During 4D screenings, audiences desire simultaneous nonexpression to hear the auditory features of a movie, and expression to engage with others when the effects of the innovative theater stimulates the senses. Each discursive struggle is "profoundly altered" (Baxter, 2011, p. 139). Audiences never fully embrace nonexpression, as the excitement of the next sensory effect produces a collective tension within the theater. Expression is never fully dominant either, as the members of the audience also constantly desire enough softness to hear the movie and detect the next sensory surprise. In essence, nonexpression and expression become whole; the screening experience is transformed.

The popular discourse surrounding movie theater behaviors suggests that talking is not desired within the movie house. Instead, moviegoers are reminded to be courteous and keep noise levels down. Baxter (2011) referred to alternate situations, in which there is a "mock decrowning of all that is normally accepted as appropriate," as carnivalesque events (p. 145). The popular discourse of silence within movie theaters is reversed when patrons assemble together to watch cult favorites in quote-a-longs. During quote-a-long screenings, audiences recite famous lines from classic films. This choral participation shifts the hierarchical preferences toward that of loudness in contrast to the usual preference of silence. This alternate celebration creates an opening for new possibilities. It suggests that when the

movie begins, the performance is not necessarily guaranteed to follow a predetermined outline or a previously written script.

Summary

This chapter began with an overview of how movie theaters came into existence following the invention of the motion picture. As the desire for entertainment gave rise to the movie house, more and more patrons filled the aisles of the theater. Eventually, expectations concerning desired behaviors within the theaters emerged. These expectations are socially constructed. Following the overview of the rise of movie theaters, I detailed the tenets of social constructionism. Next, I analyzed the issue of a copresence within movie theaters. As theaters became places where multitudes assembled, behaviors varied. Norms were socially constructed, but etiquette was not always practiced. Instead, desires of autonomy struggled against competing discourses. I continued the chapter by examining contradictory behaviors such as the discursive struggles between similarity and difference. This involves behaviors and whether interactants follow expectations of desired behaviors or struggle against such fluid assumptions. The chapter continued with my examination of relational dialectics theory, from its beginnings to its current articulation as RDT 2.0 (2011). I contemplated the dilemmas within movie theaters and what these discursive struggles mean for idealizations of movie theater behaviors and concluded by considering transformational possibilities.

A dialectical polyvalence emerges in theaters when members might express dissatisfaction with certain behaviors while occasionally being guilty of the same violations. Such a contradiction presents a dialectical shift between expressed idealizations and actualized behavior. Discursive struggles, in which oppositions can be unified and different at the same time, are discussed by Baxter (2011) in seeking to understand how interactants

relate. These perceived opposite tendencies are not binaries. They are not isolated behaviors existing at extreme sides of a spectrum. Rather, they are interdependent of/on one another. They are unified in that they give meaning to one another, constructing meaning through difference. This dynamic interplay between two perceived opposites creates a dialectical tension in which behaviors are not static. They are constantly in flux, seeking change in a process that relies on the paradox of necessitating incompatibility and dependence simultaneously. Thus, while one patron in a theater might desire seclusion within this theater to obtain the perks of a noise-free experience, this same patron might also desire a communal inclusion in which an event-like feel to the moviegoing experience is obtained. This raises questions over differences in perceptions of movie theater etiquette, differences in behaviors based on these perceived norms of theater etiquette, and feelings toward behaviors of others in movie theater settings. Baxter's (2011) relational dialectics theory provides the potential to examine discourses among parties in movie theaters. The primary goal of my thesis is to understand the contradictions or discursive struggles that emerge in attitudes and behaviors when interactants assemble in the public setting of a movie theater through the use as Baxter's (2011) relational dialectics theory as a guiding framework.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

A day at the movie theater is an experience. While no recollection of an experience can ever truly provide certainty, the retelling of experiences allows for an attempt to arrive at some assemblage of truth. Bochner (2007) reminds us that

> once the past was there, now it is gone. I want to be faithful to the past, but what I remember of my history is anchored by what summons me now to remember, and my memory is, in part, a response to what inspires my recollections. (p. 198)

Retelling and reexamining past experiences within a movie theater brings to mind fragmented recollections. The puzzle is never complete. Idealizations of desired behaviors are dependent upon the interplay of discursive struggles from the multiple interactants within the theater. Similarly, a discussion of past movie theater experiences benefits from the collected memories of multiple interactants. While the recollection of one moviegoer can never truly give a clear description of the totality of an experience, collected memories provide a more advantageous method for seeking the attitudes of interactants when contemplating idealizations of movie theater behaviors. With this in mind, I seek multiple representations for the present research on movie theater behaviors. Qualitative, interpretive research, I believe, benefits most from a multiplicity of voices, from a collection of participants expressing their ideas, attitudes, feelings, desires, and recollections of the experience of going to the movies.

In this chapter, I focus on the multiplicity of voices within the research and the methods undertaken to gain a collective response. First, I present participant information and recruitment procedures. Following that, I describe the research design, with an emphasis on

focus groups. In this section, I reveal the characteristics, benefits, and limitations of a focus group methodology. I make a strong argument for the advantages of this type of inquiry. I follow with a report of the procedure, detailing how each focus group session was conducted. I conclude the chapter with an overview of the data analysis process, with a focus on coding. This gives insight into how the text was obtained from the discussion of the focus group participants and how the text was analyzed to identify emergent themes. These themes supported the theoretical stance of relational dialectics theory in stressing that utterances involve discursive struggles that never allow for a concrete rendering of phenomena such as movie theater behaviors. Instead, such a phenomenon exists in a state of flux, wrestling with the centrifugal and centripetal forces of the discursive struggles involving notions of movie theater idealizations.

Participants

The participants of this IRB approved study included undergraduate and graduate students at a mid-sized university in the Southwest United States. Participation was voluntary and each participant received incentives in the form of food, drinks, and extra credit for a communication course. Participants who volunteered were instructed, via a flyer, to call a phone number where they were asked about demographic information. The demographic information included gender, age, ethnicity, and school status. Altogether, 11 focus groups were conducted for the research. The focus groups were conducted over a period of 13 months. The first was conducted in the fall 2013 semester. Two focus groups were conducted during the spring 2014 semester. The final eight focus groups were conducted over two weeks in the fall 2014 semester. The focus groups ranged in duration from 31 min, 27 s to 52 min, 19 s. The total combined duration of all 11 focus groups was 7 hr, 34 min, and 24 s. Of

the participants, 36 were white (47%), 23 were Hispanic (30%), 10 were Asian (13%), and 8 were African American (10%). The participants ranged in age from 18 to 63 years old. The mean age of the set of participants was 21.9. The median age was 20. Altogether, there were 77 participants, 44 females and 33 males. I sought enough participants to yield varying degrees of perceptions of movie theater behaviors.

Research Design

Arnett (2007) speaks of the connection between experiences, or communication events, and qualitative research when stating "the qualitative emphasis on human subjects, human situations, and human consequences places method at the call of a specific/particular communication event that centers the study" (p. 30). In seeking to understand the event of movie theater screenings, I conducted 11 focus group sessions to allow multiple members of the larger moviegoing culture to discuss their attitudes, ideas, experiences, and desires.

Through focus groups, I used an emic approach, which allowed me to observe participants as they discussed their feelings, ideologies, and experiences concerning movie theater viewing and the behaviors presented by themselves and others around them. As patterns developed, interpretations were drawn about the overall impression of movie behaviors. This is important to understand because it has implications on how we relate when contemplating the rights of others. Should we as individual members of an audience feel the pressure to comply with socially constructed idealizations? In addition, if we are not able to respect another's wishes for a mere two to three hours while at the movies, then what does that say about the likelihood of always adhering to idealizations of movie theater etiquette? A primary goal during these discussions was to obtain interpretations of movie theater idealizations and how behaviors and attitudes contradicted perceived notions of these

particular idealizations. I collected a multiplicity of viewpoints in the hopes of yielding varying degrees of perceptions of movie theater behaviors. With the completion of the eleventh focus group, themes began to repeat (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Focus Groups

Movie theaters are typically comprised of multiple patrons within a public space. Due to the communal domain over such a space, it is imperative that multiple voices be allowed to speak on the implications of movie theater etiquette. With this in mind, focus groups present a unique method to allow for a multivocality to enhance this research. This type of qualitative inquiry, an interpretive approach, will bring forward an opportunity for multiple members of the larger moviegoing culture to expand upon discursive struggles.

Focus groups benefit from, what Carey and Smith (1994) call, the group effect (p. 123). Focus groups are not merely a combination of interview responses, but instead allow for participants to respond to each other and gain insight collectively from one another (Carey & Asbury, 2012; Morgan, 1996). This communal effect allows for much more than a simple one-on-one interview. Participants might contribute more effectively with input from others that bring about ideas that would not have emerged individually. Basically, one participant's observations might build upon another's. These types of results would not be available through surveys, where a "yes" or "no" answer would suffice in contrast to open-ended responses.

While statistically one could easily figure out how many people have concerns about movie theater etiquette, it would not be viable to get to the depth of the issue by obtaining statements from participants about their past experiences. A survey-driven study certainly would not reveal the dynamic interplay of dialectical struggles sought by this work. Instead,

"interpretive research works to record communicative events with responsiveness, public disclosure, and public evidence that textures human science with human faces" (Arnett, 2007, p. 34). Kamberelis and Dimitriadis (2011) declare that due to the synergy within a focus group, insights are yielded that are rarely produced with other types of data gathering techniques. This study requires a personal critique of the subject matter, one which needs the values, opinions, and expressed thoughts of participants discussing their past experiences in movie theaters.

Focus groups are complex and often involve multiple functions. In speaking of the multifunctionality of focus groups, Kamberelis and Dimitriadis (2011) consider focus groups to exist "at the intersection of pedagogy, activism, and interpretive inquiry" (p. 545). Pedagogically, focus groups seek understandings that extend beyond socially influenced ideas that are accepted as natural, accurate, or taken for granted. This epistemological transcendence allows for new meanings to be created from a collection of voices expressing attitudes on a given topic. Kamberelis and Dimitriadis (2011) continue by stating, "the pedagogic function basically involves collective engagement designed to promote dialogue and to achieve higher levels of understanding of issues critical to the development of a group's interests and/or the transformation of conditions of its existence" (p. 546). This pedagogical function of a focus group methodology grants considerations of movie theater behaviors the possibility to move away from positioning such constructs as concrete norms of etiquette toward alternate possibilities.

A second function of focus groups, as stated by Kamberelis and Dimitriadis (2011), involves an activism that seeks to "transform the conditions of existence" for those without privilege and "constitutes a response to conditions of marginalization or oppression" (p. 546).

Therefore, focus groups go beyond identifying constructs that are socially deemed as normative and help researchers consider paths toward shifting such modes of marginalization. This process is not automatic as the researcher first must find a need and possess a desire to seek cultural change. However, focus groups help bring about an awareness through "conscious-raising activities," such as the discussion of attitudes concerning movie theater behaviors. Activism involves identifying socially perceived truths and pursuing alternate trajectories, new ways of understanding. If successful, it helps a researcher to understand that messages contain socially constructed perceptions of what is deemed normal and nonobjective interests derived from the culture at large. This knowledge can be utilized to present the limitations of structuring certain ideologies as truthful, natural, or all encompassing. Focus groups provide not only a multiplicity of voices, but also a multiplicity of possibilities.

Focus groups necessitate meanings to be made from both the participants within the focus groups, discussing topics such as idealizations of movie theater behaviors, and the researcher, seeking to analyze the voices from within the text. An analysis of meanings is an essential part of research. Carey and Asbury (2012) state, "human beings construct meaning by thinking about their experiences" and "interpreting their environment" (p. 27). They believe that "members' descriptions of experiences can provide unique information on how members give meaning to and organize their experiences" (p. 17). The expressed viewpoints, attitudes, and opinions of focus group participants can be examined by a researcher to analyze the meanings that are present within the discourse. These include the socially embedded utterances from within their discourse, the discursive struggles that seemingly contradict competing attitudes, and the reliance on social scripts that present interactants in

ways that follow socially constructed perceptions of standard modes of behavior (Goffman, 1959). Focus group research brings about new insights. It delves deep into the meanings of the discourse to seek understandings that might not have been reached beforehand. Lindegaard (2014) posits that

> focus group data can generate insights that go beyond the insights into the structure and membershipping that co-constitute the activities of, for instance, 'doing being members to a focus group session' or 'talking about a specific topic in a focus group session.' (p. 630)

While focus groups are criticized for not seeking knowledge of social phenomena as they naturally exist, they add the benefit of reaching beyond the narrow and limiting structure of a mere interview process. Instead, meanings are made and interpretations of those meanings allow for both alternate understandings and multiple possibilities.

This type of research is criticized for "limited data quality, difficulty of data analysis, and ethical challenges" (Carey & Asbury, 2012, p. 22). To combat the limitations of data quality, one goal was to ensure that each participant had the opportunity to discuss the topic and respond to each prompt. Detailed discussion allowed for longer comments, rich exemplars to demonstrate attitudes concerning the topic, and multiple opportunities for participants to respond to one another. Participants were encouraged to respond to prompts, reply to other participants, and reflect upon prior experiences in order to express idealizations of movie theater behaviors.

Regarding ethics, while such an event could lead to stressful environments, Corbin and Morse (2003) describe the harms of focus group participation to be no more than what could occur typically in everyday life. This research was conducted with a concern for the

participants involved. Strict methods of confidentiality were enforced, and I constantly checked for levels of discomfort or distress when conducting each focus group session. Incentives for participation were considered to be rewarding, yet moderate, so as not to seek any type of coercion. Another concern might arise from the question of bias found within the data. While Morgan (1996) warns that a downfall to focus groups involves the influence the moderator and the group have on the data obtained, such data would be representative of discursive struggles found within a structure equivalent to the community found within a movie theater. Such a representation will also allow for the quality of multivocality, which is defined as the inclusion of multiple voices, to be present within the research. Another consideration when discussing possible weaknesses of focus groups is the difficulty of data analysis. Data analysis can be achieved in a variety of ways. I utilized coding, a qualitative process of data analysis, for this research.

Procedure

The recruitment process involved a random selection of participants, who volunteered by responding to one of multiple flyers (Appendix A) that were scattered around the campus. Participants called a number listed on the flyer. Upon arrival, participants were taken to the focus group session room. The participants were read instructions (Appendix B) for the evening and then given a consent form (Appendix C) to read and sign. Instructions included an explanation of the consent form, an explanation of one's rights concerning the study, an explanation about confidentiality and means of destroying all records, information on where to find the research results, and an overview of the evening. It was also noted that the session would be recorded for transcription purposes. Confidentiality would be kept by using pseudonyms, derived from the names of classic movie stars, instead of the actual names of

the participants. The names were retrieved from the entertainment website filmsite.org. The website features a list of the top 100 greatest film stars of all time, as chosen by the website. Open-ended questions and prompts (Appendix B), in large part, guided the focus group discussion. After completion of the focus group session, participants were permitted to leave while materials containing data were collected for future analysis.

Data Analysis

Early focus group sessions of this study began with no initial theory. An inductive approach, consisting of a constant comparative method, allowed for a theory to emerge within the research. Such methods associated with Glaser and Strauss' grounded theory (1967) allow for the research to build toward a theory from the bottom up. Grounded theory usually involves "meticulous analytic attention by applying specific types of codes to data through a series of cumulative coding cycles that ultimately lead to the development of a theory" (Saldaña, 2013, p. 51). The discursive struggles that dominated the discourse within the focus groups emerged, echoing the tenets of Baxter's relational dialectics theory (2011). Carey and Asbury (2012) state, "analysis is often regarded as the most important component of focus group studies, because it has a direct impact on the usefulness of the findings" (p. 79). The analysis for this study followed the format of contrapuntal analysis as set forth by Baxter (2011) in regard to relational dialectics theory.

Contrapuntal analysis. Defined as "a specific kind of discourse analysis," (Baxter, 2011, p. 151) contrapuntal analysis begins with the selection of texts. Focus group transcripts concerning the topic of movie theater etiquette fit the criteria of "communication enactments that exemplify dialogically rich genres of communication" (Baxter, 2011, p. 153). In identifying the competing discourses within the text, the next step involves becoming

familiar with the text. For this research, I transcribed the recorded focus group sessions and re-read the transcripts to add to the level of familiarity. Next, I coded and identified categories which then led toward the discovery of themes, or discourses. Once I discovered themes, they were then reviewed, defined, and named. Finally, I searched for exemplars from within the text, which are necessary to "capture the essence of a given theme/discourse" (Baxter, 2011, p. 164). The emergent exemplars presented the discursive struggles that became visible when parties explained their viewpoints concerning movie theater behaviors and provided examples of past experiences within the theater. Following Baxter's (2011) approach, I sought to identify competing discourses, in which participants might counter previously held statements or values about movie theater idealizations, from within the text.

The specific process of analysis began by transcribing the 11 digital audio recordings, which were coded to check for emergent themes. I highlighted participant responses in a Microsoft Word document according to set colors to give structure to the transcription documents. The transcription process was completed in Microsoft Word, while I completed the coding process by hand for more control (Saldaña, 2013). Using Baxter's (2011) approach, I attempted this process by identifying competing discourses about movie theater behaviors within the text. Selections of discourse in which participants countered previously held statements or values allowed for the discovery of such competing discourses.

Throughout the coding process, I placed notes on the margins of the transcriptions to group responses by classification. Further highlights, based on color schemes, were used in order to group the notes by themes. I coded manually and handled the data through the use of hard-copy printouts and highlighters (Saldaña, 2013). Through a thematic analysis (Baxter, 2011), I looked for patterns within the text. The emerging themes, drawn from "descriptions

of behavior within a culture," were used to assess the beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions of moviegoers in a movie theater setting (Saldaña, 2013, p. 176). Baxter (2011) favors identifying discourses in an emergent way rather than beginning with supplementary knowledge that might limit the possibilities that open up within the data. Among the transcriptions, metaphors were coded to help provide a bigger picture of how individuals view theater behaviors. Focusing strategies helped me reflect on the meanings from the transcriptions (Saldaña, 2013). I identified examplars to give an understanding of the findings. During this data immersion phase, I enacted a process of sensemaking to make meanings concerning the findings. The themes identified in the coding process of this research exemplified the discursive struggles that exist in the public space of a movie theater.

Coding

Further articulations of the process of coding are necessary to understand the goals and benefits of this type of study. Saldaña (2013) defines a code as "most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based visual data" (p. 3). Coding, primarily, seeks patterns within a text. In the case of focus groups, patterns are sought from within the discourse between the participants. These consistencies help a researcher interpret how actions, experiences, and utterances repeat. Such repetitions might result in reifications of socially constructed givens. An analysis of these patterns can help identify the interplay of discourses from the culture at large and competing discourses from interactants within the culture, both present and struggling within a single utterance in what Baxter (2011) refers to as a discursive struggle. In a cyclical nature, coding links data to ideas and ideas back to data in a process that is not complete until an examination of the text has undertaken an

exhaustive analysis (Richards & Morse, 2007). Coding organizes data into categorical representations of repeated discourses from within the text of a focus group transcription.

Saldaña (2013) describes coding as "a method that enables you to organize and group similarly coded data into categories or 'families' because they share some characteristic—the beginning of a pattern" (p. 9). Coding is continual. The process begins when analyzing the discourse, either while conducting the focus group or later transcribing the text. However, coding is rarely completed after an initial attempt. The first step usually involves preliminary jottings. Saldaña (2013) encourages researchers to "jot down any preliminary words or phrases for codes on the notes, transcripts, or documents themselves" while they are writing field notes, transcribing, or organizing data (p. 20). While several methods can be utilized for the coding process, including the timing of pauses and quantifying certain phrases within a text, this research was coded solo and with no complex coding technology. As a result, I became very familiar with the text after transcribing, coding, and searching for themes.

The particular coding method utilized for this research is what Saldaña (2013) refers to as descriptive coding. In this method, the coding "summarizes in a word or short phrase-most often as a noun—the basic topic of a passage of qualitative data" (p. 88). Various patterns emerged and were given categorical labels (e.g., contradiction, distracting behaviors, event feel, policing freedoms, shifting behaviors, confronting others, and cell phones), representing the interpretations that were made regarding the discourse. Each coding category (Baxter, 2011) was given its own color and marked with a highlighter on copies of the transcriptions. This type of coding "leads primarily to a categorized inventory" of the findings identified through the analytic process (Saldaña, 2013, p. 89). Whereas discourses were given labels, based on the placement of the discourse into a categorical theme, I utilized

the actual words of the participants rather than thematic representations when presenting the findings of the study. Once categorized into themes, the content was much more organized. However, the content of the text, not the labels given, allowed for meanings to be made and new understandings to be reached. As Baxter (2011) explains, "the process unfolds until no new coding categories emerge" (p. 162). Then, themes are reviewed, named or defined, and used in order to locate exemplars (Baxter, 2011). This coding method ultimately provides the researcher with the tools for identifying discursive struggles such as the competing discourses concerning shifting desires for movie theater behaviors.

Summary

In this chapter, I presented the methodological framework of the research. The study began from the ground up, utilizing grounded theory, before relational dialectics theory emerged as a beneficial theory to provide meaning for the discursive struggles in the discussion of movie theater behaviors. I began the study with a participant recruitment process. Following this process, I conducted focus groups with the goal of seeking a multiplicity of voices from within the moviegoing culture. Focus groups may have some limitations, but this type of method provides valuable data when seeking multiple perceptions of movie theater experiences, opinions, and attitudes. The procedure utilized for this research involved methods of focus group discussion, which led to an analysis of the data obtained after each recorded session was transcribed, examined, and coded. Ultimately, the analysis resulted in the finding of situations in which interactants struggle with competing discourses, pitting perceptions of socially constructed idealizations of movie theater behaviors against instances in which moviegoers expressed contradictory leanings and moved toward the margins of movie house perceptions.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Moviegoers struggle with many paradoxical desires concerning behaviors within the public space of a movie theater: seeking to lean toward cultural understandings of preferred modes of behavior while seeking to behave in unique, satisfactory ways, attempting to behave in ways that fit with examples of past experiences while attempting to correlate behaviors with temporal examples within the theater, and aiming to behave in ways interactants prefer from fellow moviegoers within a screening while also aiming to behave in ways free of any constraints or limitations. An emergent relational dialectic in this study seems to be one of inclusiveness and simultaneous privacy, as theorized by Baxter and Montgomery (1996, p. 175). A centripetal pull toward community functions against the centrifugal push away in a struggle of competing discourses within the movie theater, creating a paradox of desires (Baxter, 2011). This paradox allows for multiple opinions about movie theater etiquette, many which may seem to contradict one another. Such opinions were present in the findings of the analysis of the focus group transcriptions on movie theater behaviors. A sort of polyvalent dynamic, one in which multiple values concerning behaviors at movie theaters were possessed, reoccurred in the discourse between the participants of the focus group studies. DeFrancisco and Palczewski (2007) speak of the dichotomy presented when respondents share the same understanding of an issue, yet come up with different valuations or interpretations of the issue. Such a dichotomy, where a plethora of valuations become, is referred to as polyvalence. Several emergent contradictory themes gave credence to this polyvalence incongruity as participants displayed multiple viewpoints that seemingly disagreed with one another. Participants conveyed (a) idealized wishes for theater screenings,

often seemed to (b) claim the theater as an extension of home, (c) clashed with competing desires, (d) viewed the screening as an event, and (e) performed inconsistent behaviors while situated in the public space of a movie theater.

Idealized Wishes for Theater Screenings

Participants expressed desires honoring the wishes of self in relation to the aspirations of movie theater idealizations. Rather than focusing on goals typical of past experiences in movie theaters, they expressed wishes for circumstances to be beyond the norm. In defining perceptions of idealized movie theater behaviors, participants strived for a situation in which the circumstances would benefit the cravings of self. Thus, the first theme emerged when participants showed discursive struggles between idealized wishes for the chronotopic moment at hand versus past cultural experiences in which expectations were not always met (Baxter, 2011, p. 30). Participants preferred an idealized situation, one that would be socially perceived as lacking any type of distractions during the theatrical experience. This discursive struggle existed within the link of the utterance chain, as discussed by Baxter (2011), where interactants competed with the distal already-spoken notion of movie theater expectations. These distal already-spoken utterances circulating within the culture depict movie theaters as places where idealized behaviors are not always present.

Participants viewed idealized movie theater behaviors as a construct in which very little to no distractions took away from the participant's experience while viewing the movie, yet they understood this was not typical of past experiences. Gene noted that moviegoers should "just have some general decorum." The extent to which the participants desired an experience with no distractions even prohibited freedoms normally enjoyed by the participants in usual situations. A particular movie theater chain, the Alamo Drafthouse,

embodied the typical preference for movie theater regulations as expressed by some participants due to its stricter enforcement of idealized behaviors. Even with the threat of being kicked out, one member of the focus group, Marlon, favored the chain and suggested, "It was really strict, but I was able to get more into the movie, focus on more, knowing that there wouldn't be any distractions." This lack of concern for freedoms in exchange for the promise of zero distractions exemplifies the idealized environment desired by the members of the focus groups in seeking to define perceptions of idealized movie theater behaviors. Russell agreed with these sentiments when stating, "I would like the theater to carry out with their threats." Errol took it further and stated, "They shouldn't be watching a movie if they can't be quiet in the movie theater. It just comes down to that. If they can't then somebody definitely, like the employees, should come in and remove them." Whether the policing controls others or the participants themselves, certain discourses seemed to indicate that desires on policing shifted. When the policing benefitted idealized screenings, it was deemed desirable.

Wishes based on location. Policing considerations often positioned some as guilty interactants who needed more supervision, while positioning other participants as less guilty. Certain marginalized others, often noted for characteristics associated with certain economic locations, were thought to be in need of more policing. Marlene suggested that when you go to watch a movie at a dollar theater distractions should be expected because "That brings in people who don't even care because they're paying a dollar fifty." Disagreements about moviegoers from lower economic neighborhoods were present.

Paul: I mean, if you have a dollar movie, then—I don't want to say about quality of people, but people that weren't raised the way you were are going to be attending that movie.

Jane: I don't think money would affect the way that you were raised. It affects if the person can afford certain things, but lessons are lessons whether you're a millionaire or dirt poor. So, I mean, people are all the same.

Location and community situated some as likely to break perceptions of normative behavior for movie theater screenings.

Errol: I think it depends on the people outside of the theater, like the community.

Gary: Yeah

Errol: If they're known for crime or something, or just like a bad reputation in general, then I'm pretty sure that they're going to enforce it more.

Interviewer: So the audience might have an impact on that?

Gary: Yeah.

Sean preferred watching movies in the city where he was attending college in contrast to the city where he was raised. The location, and the audience within that location, played a factor in determining where he wanted to see a movie. He divulged, "We went to see *Bad Grandpa* (2013) and it was just a complete shit show inside the theater." Sean admitted later, however, that "by policing it, you're essentially taking away freedoms." While policing might seem to provide for a more ideal screening, considerations for how such an act can lead to oppression of only a select few and of how it can marginalize certain audience members are often overlooked.

Wishes based on audience characteristics. Another audience deemed undesirable, one that would not be ideal for an exemplary screening, is an audience consisting of multiple children. Joan voiced, "If you watch *Frozen* (2013) in the theaters and there's a bunch of six-year-old girls around you, you're going to hear all types of stuff." Whether kids, marginalized others, or another type of audience from a specific location, participants situate certain identities as more likely to behave in distracting ways.

Burt, a participant from Seoul, Korea, stated that "Americans react more to the movie." In contrast, Shirley suggested that audiences in Puerto Rico were more distracting than what she was accustomed. She expressed, "It was just really different because everybody was singing and wooing during the movie and it was just awful . . . I couldn't focus on what was happening on the screen." Perhaps it is not the interactant that is guilty of the behavior, but the relationship between the interactant and the moviegoer's environment. These discursive struggles emerge when parties make meaning together—or fail to make meaning together.

Wishes for respect. People were often positioned as those responsible for preventing idealized situations. However, other culprits came up in the discussion of movie theater behaviors. The idealized environment desired by the participants excluded distractions such as electronic devices, constant chatter, and persistent movement. The justification for prohibiting such distractions largely involved what participants labeled as respect. Participants felt others should show more respect for those around them. Cary felt civility had declined altogether and asserted, "Well I think people have given up respect for everybody around them anyway." Participants favored idealized screenings, as expressed by the utterances given by focus group members when discussing desired scenarios.

Greta: I've had a similar situation where it was just us and it was great. It's like being at home, but…

Audrey: With a huge screen at front!

Greta: With a huge screen at front!

Fred: Yeah, I think I agree with that. Just not having to worry about being crushed by the person next to me, you know, I sort of take up a lot of room so I really enjoy not having too many people in the theater. It really makes it uncomfortable.

Interviewer: So when you all have more space to yourself that makes it more ideal?

Ingrid: Yes.

Audrey: And location, too!

Fred: Oh yeah!

Audrey: In the very middle. In the perfect spot! That makes it a lot better.

The desire for a quiet environment while situated in a public space led to a discursive struggle between expression and nonexpression. In addition, the example above alluded to the desire for seclusion within a public space, in contrast to the inclusiveness provided by such a setting. Since there was nothing that could be done about the public nature of the setting, participants felt the co-constructed expectations of the movie theater necessitated respect for others within this space. Participants felt they were owed respect simply due to the public nature of the environment.

Wishes based on expense. Another reason participants felt the environment justified no distractions was due to the price of admission. Marilyn told of a story in which she felt the price of admission justified such expectations by stating:

> I think that my dad had to shell out $130 for all of us to go see this movie. So if you're paying that much money for a ticket and you're having food delivered to your table, you expect to be respected.

When participants paid the price of admission, this demanded a noise-free environment to bolster their viewing experience in the theater. Participants noted how even matinees are now more expensive than they were in the past. With increasing prices at theaters, participants felt conditions within the theater while watching a movie should be improved.

Wishes for comfort. Certain locations and certain environments were deemed ideal. Environments in which the setting allowed for more comfort were favored over environments in which it became clear that an interactant was not in the comfort of home, but rather in a public space surrounded by others. Instead, participants such as Sophia favored theaters with "wider seats."

Most participants perceived empty theaters as ideal. Multiple accounts of screenings in which the participants, a few friends, and very few others were described as more desirable in comparison to usual movie theater experiences. Joan stated, "I love going to the theater and being the only one there." Olivia added, "My favorite is when you're the only one there, you and whoever you're with, like four people, and you can get where those bars are and you can just prop your feet up." Joan suggested that "Sundays are the best time to go. That's when you know when to go. No one's ever there."

Smaller audiences, however, do not always guarantee an ideal experience. Often, patrons feel those within the theater make the difference. In contrast to situations in which certain audiences were constructed as undesirable, like-minded audiences were considered ideal for moviegoing experiences. Russell proclaimed,

> Small doesn't necessarily mean that. I think what happens, what the deal is, usually when you go [during off time], people are making a point to be there for a reason. There are probably people like-minded like you who are there to see the movie and not just, you know, looking for something to do.

Jodie preferred theaters that resembled the comfort of home. She characterized her ideal theater as "kind of like a home theater." She gave her opinion of an ideal experience when she recounted,

> I went on a date at the movie theater by a town near mine. They serve you dinner while you watch the movie. So that was nice. They had a table and they come and take your order and bring you drinks and dinner. That was nice.

Cate's opinion was not quite as simple. She spoke of an innovative theater with reclining chairs in the aisles: "iPic theater! They have, like really big, comfortable chairs. You can basically go to sleep in them. It's really chill!" Participants revealed that moviegoing experiences should be ideal. When audience members misbehave, someone should police those behaviors. Moviegoers perceive that economic factors and location play an important role in determining whether behaviors will be desirable within a movie theater. Seclusion is often preferred, but sometimes even a few movie theater patrons can ruin an ideal experience. Like-minded people, such as those with similar beliefs, are favored. However, when perceptions concerning behaviors shift, even like-minded people might behave in ways that do not agree with temporal notions of etiquette. What leads to a preference in certain behaviors? Russell suggested that "It's a learned behavior. What we're seeing is how other people act and they act along the same lines." In addition, he claimed, "I think the audience—how they react or how they make you react—can adversely affect how you enjoy

the film and how it's supposed to be done." Barbara stated "I grew up going to the movies, so I learned as a kid that you're supposed to be quiet in movies." Anything is allowable if the collection of moviegoers agree upon it. Jodie suggested that "if the crowd's in unison, like laughing, that's fine." Social influence is suggested to both create these idealizations of behavior and create less than ideal behaviors. Regardless of the dilemma with the moviegoing situation, patrons desire experiences that border on perfection. Such idealizations seem impossible. Bette Davis implores her costar in *Now, Voyager* (1942) "Don't let's ask for the moon. We have the stars." Such sentiments are not expressed by moviegoers who seek not only the moon, but the heavens and the stars as well.

Claiming the Theater as One's Own Domain

A second pattern appeared when participants reported instances of behavior that contradicted previously stated preferences of conduct. This contradiction demonstrates the polyvalence-like quality typical of movie theater viewers, as exemplified in the comments of participants. Interpretations differed concerning behaviors of others, but also differed in the context of domain over public spaces. A struggle between privilege and conformity emerged in the discourses expressed in the focus groups. Many of the behaviors considered undesirable in relation to differing views of desired conduct stemmed from a repeating notion of viewing the theater or the time spent in the theater as something belonging to the participant. In many instances, phrases such as "my chair," "my space," and "my time" were used when referring to experiences at a movie house.

This demonstrates that when patrons view the theater as an extension of their home, they feel more at ease, more comfortable, and thus are more likely to engage in behaviors that are not in agreement with the wishes of others sharing this space at this moment. In

discussing a past experience which was deemed unfavorable, Humphrey complained about "people [sitting] directly behind me and [using] my chair as a foot rest." Bette also added "if someone's feet are on my chair, I'll be like, 'oh, hey, excuse me, mine, get them off.'" In both instances, the participants referred to the theater seats as "my chair."

Claiming space. While this might not seem too out of the ordinary for an individual sitting in a movie theater to claim a seat for this temporal moment, it also stresses how while enjoying a movie some might feel that they are momentarily taking up domain in a space where they feel completely at home. The discourse circulating within the larger culture depicts a theater as a public space, not an individual domain. Baxter (2011) mentions how "the discourses of individualism and community circulate as distal already-spokens…" and provides an understanding for a struggle between autonomy and connection (p. 61). In addition, movie theater patrons battled with discursive struggles between inclusion and seclusion (Baxter, 2011). This is embodied within the behavior of individuals seeking to gain the privileges of an experience typical of a home viewing versus conforming to the norms associated with the communal connectedness, or inclusiveness, of a movie theater. These individuals momentarily seek a domain that will allow for seclusion. This domain often stretched beyond the confinements of a single seating location. Often, one's personal space in a movie theater extended to the adjacent seats around the individual. Many participants stressed their desires for seclusion within a pluralistic setting (a location occupied by multiple interactants).

> Cary: Is it just me or do other people get annoyed that the theater's not full and you get there in time, pick your seat and they come in and they sit right on top of you…
>
> Humphrey: Ah, that's horrible.

Cary: …when the whole freaking theater's empty and then they want to have their conversations.

Humphrey: That's horrible.

Cary: It's like, go back two or three rows where I can't hear you, but they sit [in] the row behind you, or right beside you.

Bette: There should be groups and when you're in a group there should be a seat between you and another group…

Cary: Right!

Marlon: A buffer seat!

Bette: Yeah, a buffer seat. Leave one seat between you and another group or you and another couple or something.

Even the occasional disturbance of one crossing in front of others to get to the bathroom was criticized. Many participants complained of people who "can't hold their water at all" or have an "8-year-old bladder." Such clashes with personal space led many of the participants to form ill opinions of others while positioning this domain as temporary property, belonging to the viewer for a limited moment of time in a struggle between seclusion and the socially constructed idealism that suggests parties must adhere to inclusion within a movie theater.

Regarding space, the question of personal space within a movie theater took on a whole new meaning when personal safety issues began to surface after the movie theater shooting incident in Aurora, Colorado (Bean et al., 2015). Participants revealed that after the massacre, they felt more threatened by others surrounding them in a public space, particularly at movie theaters. Steve divulged,

> I remember when the shooting happened inside the theater. Whenever I'd go to the theater, I was paranoid. I would, when someone would get up, I'd always look over them and make sure because I was paranoid. That feeling, after a while kind of goes away. Yeah, like, if someone reached out, I'd be like, 'Oh crap! We're going to die!' Yeah, it was pretty . . . it was really distracting for me.

Mae admitted that "[she] didn't go for a long time after that." Diane stated, "I didn't go to see Batman (*The Dark Knight Rises* [2012])." The feeling of paranoia created a desire for autonomy within a space where audiences normally collect together.

Claiming time. Time was another property participants wished to situate as their own while gazing at the cinematic screening in the movie theater setting. Like space, time was viewed as a right to be protected when taking up space in a movie theater setting. Participants valued the period as a moment of enjoyment that should not be tainted by the breaking of perceived norms of movie theater etiquette. This was embodied when Cary claimed, "I go to the movies roughly once, maybe twice a year…I don't want other [people] interfering with my time out." The momentary excursion presented by the screening of a film at a theater is often viewed as a privilege that necessitates an idealized environment for the moviegoer. Anything else would be interfering with one's time, a temporary period that the ticket-purchasing patron views through socially constructed meanings given to theaters as an object to be owned rather than an abstract concept one passes through. Bette vocalized her disapproval of others interfering with her time out when she asserted, "they're taking away the movie from you whenever they say their audible comments." This comment positions not only the time spent at the theater as an object of possession, but it also portrays the movie as something that belongs to the individual. With audience members viewing the theater, the

time spent at the theater, and the movie screening as something to possess, it is possible to see the transformation of the movie house as a public domain into one more closely resembling one's own personal space or in a more personal comparison, one's home.

Claiming the theatrical journey. The time spent in a movie theater is constructed as journey through a different time and space location. The journey leads an interactant into a sort of fantasy, a break from "reality." Sean echoed these sentiments:

> I think the whole point with any sort of entertainment is you're supposed to suspend your belief in reality long enough to feel like you're a part of whatever's happening and if you don't, if you have that constant baby crying, cell phone going off, person talking, you're not going to have that.

Olivia recalled a situation in which the mood was broken by another interactant:

> We were on a cruise and we were watching *The Fault in Our Stars* (2014). It was a really sad part and this guy just starts laughing and stuff because he didn't know what was going on. He just like came into the movie and he started yelling "What are they doing?" because they were naked and stuff and he was like, "Oh, what are y'all watching?" Like, everybody's balling! So, that was interesting.

Buster disapproved of an attempt at humor when one interactant distracted others during a screening:

> I think another bad experience I had is when people try to be comedians in a movie theater. I remember the worst one was when we went to go watch *The Woman in Black* (2012) and it has Daniel Radcliffe in it from the Harry Potter movies and at one point, it was right around the climax/suspenseful scenes, and somebody said, 'Use your wand, Harry!' It kind of just ruined the whole movie for me.

Another distraction, involving a Daniel Radcliffe film, occurred when Shirley expressed,

> You're so into the movie and you're really focusing on it and then all of a sudden you hear something that's distracting you from what's going on and it just ruins the whole moment. Like there was, I think it was *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* (2005), we were watching that when I was a kid and he was fighting the dragon and then he disappears for a little bit and everyone thinks he's dead and then you hear somebody, or like a little kid scream, 'Yay!" and it just ruins everything.

Distractions, in this sense, take interactants away from their trip into the fantasy world. This journey into the dreamlike state of a moviegoing experience is constructed as a right of the moviegoer, a possession that should not be stolen. Similarly, distractions are undesirable when certain genres built upon teaching ideological beliefs are infringed upon. Myrna spoke of an incident in which others disrupted her spiritual screening experience:

> You can tell who the people in the audience are. They're sort of dragged there and it's like you're ruining it for the ones who want to learn. They're not so much for the entertainment. They're more for learning, which probably isn't a good place—to be placed in a movie theater.

Her communal experience is one based upon spiritual implications, in which interactants might exclaim "Amen" or shout, "Yes, brother. I got you." Her response to such an expressive form of behavior as "Awe, that's so sweet" is not typical of instances in which interactants shout out during a movie theater screening. Her problem was with those who did not feel the spiritual connection with others in the theater, not with the loud behaviors of those with whom she connected. She later stated, "I think that's what makes the movie better, at least in that genre, because everyone's united in that whole entire movie theater."

Claiming the domain. While many of the participants portrayed behaviors that suggested they place the theater as an extension of their own home, some even favored viewing films in the comfort of their living room versus the collective atmosphere occupied by the theater. Russell pointed out that "four people going out can cost up to $80. Eighty dollars is about ten months of Netflix." This further positions the centripetal favoritism toward seclusion when viewing a film versus the inclusiveness offered by a movie theater. Bette supported her inclination toward home screenings by suggesting, "you can pause if you have to get up to use the bathroom, that's my thing." As suggested by the participants, a home viewing offers something the theaters cannot. With less disturbances and technological advances, it allows for momentary pauses of the screening, screens that are more theater-like in their size and as one participant noted the possibility of seeing current releases on bootleg copies of films. An idealized viewing would resemble one in which going to the movie theater would be just like watching a movie at home. Participants discussed one such scenario in which the theater transcended into a close replication of a home viewing.

Gary: You can order dinner or whatever.

James: You push a button and they come to you and you just order.

Gary: Comfy chairs.

James: Oh, yeah.

Julie: I love the recliners.

Lauren: Oh the movie theaters that have the recliners!

Julie: Yeah, those are cool!

James: I've been to actually one movie theater where it was a couch room and it was just full of couches, like big couches, and people just take off their shoes and just watch a movie. It's like you're at home.

Lauren: It's comfy.

Errol: It's like a homey feel.

James: You feel like you're at home watching a brand new movie.

Yet, a home viewing does not offer everything. In a discursive struggle with seclusion, Cary noted, "You don't get the experience though." Jack agreed that "the whole theater experience—like the surround sound, the visuals, you know—it's a lot better than watching it at home." Perhaps the ultimate idealized situation would involve the experience offered by the movie theater setting along with the distraction-free environment of the home. Bette discussed such a scenario when she told of how,

> One time I was in the movie theater. It was only me and my best friend. It was *Sex and the City* (2008), the movie, and we were the only ones so we raised up all the arms and we laid and we were talking during the movie and everything, but I guess since it was only us it wasn't…if it would've been anywhere else it would've been bad etiquette, but it was just us two so we didn't care.

The theater occupants in the story struggled with the discourse positioning a theater as a public space filled with socially embedded norms of behavior, seeking instead to favor behaviors usually associated with seclusion. The participant quoted above noted how this behavior would not fit in with norms of theater etiquette under normal circumstances, but in a polyvalent fashion she allowed for the breaking of etiquette norms due to the lightly populated quality of this particular screening. Values shifted when the theater was perceived

as transcending from public into a private space. The norms of behavior given to movie theaters exist within the discourse of the larger culture, the distal already-spoken, and the behaviors demanded by these norms are usually performed due to attempts at satisfying the culture's discourse, seeking to comply with the distal not-yet-spoken (Baxter, 2011).

There are many instances told of how such behaviors occur even when theaters are occupied by multiple others. Katharine, for instance, fondly remembers instances of when the theater felt like, "it was kind of like just getting a big group of your friends and watching a movie in your living room." This behavior leads to clashes in occupants who desire the feel of being at home versus occupants who desire little to no distractions from others around them. This resembles the Baxter and Montgomery (1996) notion of inclusiveness, yet simultaneous seclusion. A contradictory polyvalence emerges in which individuals seek to exhibit behaviors typical of one's home while simultaneously desiring others recognize the public quality of the environment. As Jimmy noted, "I guess people try to make themselves too much at home in the movie theater." Taking on ownership of a public space creates a tension between those seeking to follow civic expectations of etiquette and those seeking to act in accordance to the casual behaviors expressed at home.

Clashes of Desires

The paradoxical nature of a polyvalent dynamic allows for individuals to desire unobtrusive behaviors from others while sharing a movie theater space together and to alternately desire unlimited conditions placed upon their own selves in the same temporal period. The wishes of the viewer seeking a noise-free environment and the individual seeking a place more closely resembling a home create an oppositional tension. When these

seemingly polarized desires clashed in this public space, diverse opinions about how to solve the behaviors regarded as unfavorable emerged.

Clashes with others. Multiple participants in the focus group expressed instances of displeasure when confronted with distractions during a movie viewing experience. Olivia said, "They should know what they're supposed to act like in a public space, especially a movie theater, and if they're not acting correctly, they need to fix it." Mae added, "you've got to know when to be quiet." The participants wanted the culprit, or another, to fix the problem created by these distracting behaviors. However, very few of the participants felt a desire to react to the distractions or to those responsible for them. They, instead, felt the responsibility of curbing such disturbances belonged to the staff of the theater. Yet, the socially constructed perceptions of movie theater etiquette are constantly in flux. Therefore, this creates a near impossible task when individuals expect the staff of a theater to enforce perceptions of etiquette when perceptions are never static. In addition, when other individuals attempted to alert people of unwanted noise the participants often saw them as just as much a part of the problem. Bette stated, "The person trying to regulate it is just as annoying." She also suggested, "You don't want to be the person in the movie theater that's like 'shhhhh.'" Instead of addressing the problem independently, Bette suggested either the staff or the individual at fault should be responsible. She added,

> I mean, they have workers that are supposed to be in the movie theater regulating that kind of stuff. So I feel like it's their responsibility, but it's also the person's responsibility to know [they're] doing wrong in this situation.

While some expressed the responsibility of handling etiquette violations solely belonged to the staff, others felt more comfortable handling the situation independently, situating the

protection of socially constructed norms within a theater as the responsibility of all.

While many of the participants felt uneasy confronting others who were thought to be guilty of creating disturbances, others disagreed and felt it was acceptable for the individual to deal with the situation alone. They felt they were justified in intervening due to the interpersonal, co-constructed norms of public space and experience. Elizabeth revealed that when confronted with a noisy theater, "[she] just ignore[s] it," whereas another participant recalled a time when a distraction was so intense, he felt the need to intervene. Jimmy stated, "You know what would help sometimes? Like, sometimes if you just be that random douchebag and just join in on their conversation like, 'Really? [They] really did that? Really? Tell me more.'" The intervention is suggested to be acceptable in this circumstance if that individual interferes with your rights to view a film without a disturbance. Kirk claimed that his response is to vocalize, "Look brother, you need to shut your ass up. We all paid for this movie just like you." James admitted "I threw my drink at a person once. I was bad. That was bad." Despite being kicked out of the movie theater later and violating another interactant's experience, James noted in the end that "He shut up!" Joan stated she felt "I had a fear that I'm going to commit an act of assault in a movie theater" and admitted "I'll punch someone in the face in a movie theater." Ultimately, Russell concluded that intervening in such a way might be distracting to others and admitted, "I have to get to the realization that even though I'm letting out my frustration on them, I'm probably ruining it for everybody else."

Clashing preferences. In many of these situations, the participants named types of disturbances that infringed upon their rights to a noise-free moviegoing experience. Yet, many of these individuals later stated that they were guilty of the same breaks in perceived norms of movie theater etiquette. Doris expressed that "it's okay to have a reaction." Marilyn

recalled such an instance when revealing an infraction in the theater due to shock at the outcome of a *Twilight* (2008) film's plot breaking from the outcome in the book,

> And guilty, I am, of that generation. I READ those books. And in the last scene or whatever you see this big fight and a bunch of them die and I remember standing up. My eyes just the size of moons and I said, "WHAT?" Like, just as loud as I could get it out of my mouth because I was just infuriated. And I was at the midnight premiere of this movie.

Not only are behaviors inconsistent, but so are preferences. Sally complained of audible distractions so loud that "you can hear their entire conversation." Later, however, she admitted displeasure when voices were even less audible. She complained of "those people that are right behind you and they're just whispering." The fluctuating tendencies of idealizations of desire allow for breaks from what is perceived as the norm. These breaks can be caused by other factors.

Shifting desires based on movie genres. Certain genres created instances in which participants allowed for expressive behaviors, breaking the normative scripts that seemingly had been in place before. One certain genre, the comedy, seemed to demand noise from the audience.

> Errol: I think it's just depending on what kind of movie it is, especially if it's a comedy movie.
>
> James: Yeah, who cares?
>
> Gary: Then everyone's going to be laughing.
>
> James: Yeah. Then it's okay.
>
> Gary: It's expected of people to laugh loud.

Another contradictory allowance for intrusions was presented as beneficial, breaking from the socially constructed expectation of nonexpression within a theater, when participants discussed the genre of scary movies. Marlene insisted that during a scary movie "there has to be someone beside me to watch this movie." Doris admitted to grabbing a stranger sitting next to her. Barbara suggested "you can almost feel the collective fear in the room when you're watching a movie in this big space." The desire for community within this particular type of movie also created allowances for distracting behaviors.

> Ingrid: I know that with scary movies for me, I rarely go see because I will disturb someone. I get scared very easily so I scream, I do everything I can just to let it out so I know I'm disrupting everybody at a much higher level than I need to so I try not to go to those movies.
>
> Fred: I feel like someone screaming helps the horror aspect of a movie.
>
> Audrey: Yeah!
>
> Fred: Because honestly that helps me get a little more scared because the scary movies for me are really corny.
>
> Ingrid: Yay! I help!

Buster added, "I like seeing people jump. I like seeing popcorn fly. I like seeing people tear up and have an emotional reaction to the movie." Maureen, Laurence, and Ginger agreed that certain situations call for certain breaks in normative behavior. They desired community versus autonomy in order to enhance the qualities characteristic of certain genres.

> Maureen: The people that start laughing and you're laughing just because it sounds so stupid.

> Laurence: Or like a scary movie when they say something funny and you could just . . . it's kind of in the moment. It's just hilarious.
>
> Ginger: Sometimes when you watch the same movie at home or something, you won't laugh as much because other people aren't laughing.

When community created a special feel to the screening experience, allowances were made for these types of responses.

Excused/condemned behaviors. Certain interruptions were even thought to be helpful, as Kirk suggested that they often redirected you to pay attention to the movie. He suggested "You'll start thinking about what the person was saying and be like, 'Shit! It was important' or 'Damn! I missed that.' Gene summed up the attitude of excusing distracting behaviors during certain genres by voicing,

> I wouldn't say acceptable, but it's not something you would frown upon as much because if everybody else is being rowdy and loud, if there's a scene that was funny or something, I guess it would be acceptable because everybody else was. Same thing, like with a scary scene, if everybody else was taken about by it, I guess it would be kind of acceptable.

Participants are even willing to forgive cell phone transgressions during scary movies if these transgressions add to the movie by creating humor. Edward recalled when,

> Some people can be like, big laughing about it. Since I got experience two years, yeah, two years ago, uh, when I watched a movie and some, one person's cell phone was like, *Gangnam Style* (2012). It was real popular. It was the following year. Everyone was laughing and I think that definitely is like, 'Oh, it's really funny then. We can just overlook that incident.'

Perhaps the shifting preferences in movie theaters lead to situations in which desires will continue to clash. Jack and Myrna disagreed on the problems created by cell phones.

> Jack: I feel like it's a lot worse. When I was younger, I went to go see *Free Willy* (1993) and everyone brought their kids and everyone's paying attention because it entertains their kids and not everyone was playing with their phones and stuff.
>
> Myrna: I feel differently. I actually feel like it got better because instead of having popcorn and other nasty things, like gum, [thrown] at you, now they're on their phones. So at least the attention is not on you, you know? They're just being distracting. I don't know. I'd rather have someone on their phone than throwing stuff at me.

Spencer and Russell also expressed differing opinions concerning cell phones in movie theaters.

> Spencer: It doesn't really bother me with the cell phones if their brightness isn't all the way up and they're not snapchatting with the flasher on. The, I don't really care. But the talking on the phone, I hate that.
>
> Russell: I don't have a problem with people having phones, but I think there's a point, you know, when that light goes down, cell phones need to be off.

Disregarding the desires of others while expecting those behaviors from them presents a contradiction similar to the expression-nonexpression dialectical tension presented by Baxter (2011) in discussing struggles of expression. While some may want others not to express themselves during a screening, it is not always as crucial for those individuals to follow the same standard of expectations, resulting in a polyvalence of contradictions.

The Theatrical Event

Another reoccurring theme that I found in the analysis of the focus group transcription involved the viewpoint of looking at an experience at the movie theater as an event. It became a special event that demanded certain rules to be followed. It converted into a communal experience that transcended a singular viewing of a film and instead allowed for a feeling of togetherness. In contrast to earlier accounts, this theme shifted the centripetal and centrifugal discourses typical of a movie theater and transformed the event into one with a carnivalesque spirit (Baxter, 2011). The dominant discourse of nonexpression gave way to expression. The dominant discourse of seclusion as favorable allowed inclusion to become preferred. Cary described participating in such an event while watching the film *ParaNorman* (2012). He proclaimed,

> I don't know if the movie held their attention, but that was a great time out and there were a lot of people in the theater and I didn't have a lot of issues with people conversing all around and everybody I guess was, it was the movie, everybody was into it and the kids were well behaved or entertained enough to not be little monsters.

Katharine reiterated by providing an account of her own. She stated in many cases it is,

> [because] the movie is so good. So we feel like we're in the same boat with all these people we don't even know [because] the movie is so good. And we're like, on the same level of into the movie-ness.

Simultaneous expression and nonexpression are desired in screenings like this. Marlene spoke of a great experience in which the theater was quiet, but when a momentary distraction arose, it added to the event.

> Whenever I went to see *Mockingjay* (2014), we went to the midnight premiere and it was actually very packed, but it was calm. And right before the movie, someone did the little [*Mockingjay*] whistle and then everyone did it. But then the room was silent. So, it was actually a good movie experience.

Through this transformation into the collective from the polemical, conflicting posture, interactants shift desires. The moviegoers forego behaviors of nonexpression and privacy; they instead value a cohesive experience that complements the story being told on the screen (Baxter, 2011). The experience becomes an assemblage of the story crafted by the director and the story being told in the aisles of the theater. Jean recalled, "I had an experience just like that. Everybody was clapping at the right time and it was really good. No talking."

Hybridization. This dynamic emerges when the movie is exceptional, such as the instance described by Cary when stating, "*Saving Private Ryan* (1998) on the big screen was like being *in* the invasion." Other times, the film lends itself to a communal interaction. Cary, again stresses, "[*The*] *Rocky Horror Picture Show* (1975) was wonderful on TV, but until you've been to a theater and seen it and saw the crowd and participated, you will never experience [*The*] *Rocky Horror Picture Show*." At times, the audience itself creates the event. Cary retold of when he,

> …used to sit in the balcony with my wife and all her sisters and her family and it was nothing for conversations to be going on and somebody on the screen will do something and somebody there [says], 'Ha, reminds me of you [wife's name]' and there will be my wife, my wife says, 'You just shut up down there. I remember when you did this.'

He described such a scenario as "a communal event." Hybridization occurs (Baxter, 2011, p. 139) when competing discourses mix and create new meanings for a moviegoing experience. Shirley admitted, "I like going to packed theaters because—I saw *This Is the End* (2013) and it was so much funnier because everybody was so into it and laughing. It was way better with a huge crowd." Buster spoke of another communal event by recalling,

> I remember going to watch *Star Wars: Episode III – Revenge of the Sith* (2005) when it came out. It was a pretty nice environment because a lot of people went, like older folks went and they brought their kids. Something exciting would happen, like when Obi Wan first showed up on the scene, and everyone started clapping, like getting excited. And then, at the end, you could tell some people were sniffling and stuff. Like, everyone seemed really attached to that movie.

Russell remembered another emotional experience that was spurred on by both the dramatic story on the screen and the electricity created by the community feel from within the theater.

> God, whenever I saw *Schindler's List* (1993), it was just pure depression. I didn't hear anybody the whole film. Everybody left with their heads down. It was so traumatizing. I really do think the type of movie really does affect how you experience and how you react within the public. When you're in a film, it's like a thrill ride. If you go on a roller coaster, isn't it cooler to ride it with a bunch of people?

An event often takes place when the screening occurs out of the usual situations of a moviegoing experience. Sean spoke of a trip to Scotland that resulted in an event-like moviegoing experience.

> The different theater experience for me was when we were in Scotland. Everybody went to go see Loch Ness and we had to travel there, stay the night, and travel back. It was basically a three day trip. We were like, 'No. We're not going to do that. We're going to stay in Edinburgh and we're going to just enjoy the night life.' So, we spent all day at a movie theater. It was me and a buddy of mine and they let you bring in alcohol. There were restaurants and bars downstairs. There was a weight room upstairs. It was twelve pounds for a ticket, which is fairly expensive.

Similarly, a communal feel to a movie can emerge when the audience possesses a similar quality, such as the emotional state of leaving home for the first time. Marilyn remembered such an event when watching *Toy Story 3* (2010) with a group of college students who had recently moved away to attend college and recalled,

> We'd all just moved away to college and I remember that was one of the very first places that I connected emotionally with every single person in that theater. We balled, like as a mass. We all cried. And one of the guys, I mean he was a big old football playing guy, he got up and went to the bathroom and he came back with napkins because we were just sobbing. I mean, we were so sad.

These accounts give some insight into how instances in the theater create an event. This event takes place when, as Rita suggested, "We all feel the same way." The momentary situation of a film screening personifies an event that allows the audience to allow for interaction in some instances and discourages it in others. Shifting dynamics influenced the allotments accepted by this theatrical event in a diachronic separation, as mentioned by Baxter (2011, p. 127). This event might only be possible when those occupying this space have the same goals and desires for the experience as others in the audience, changing the co-

constructed meanings associated with a theater. Baxter (2011) referred to events like these as aesthetic moments.

Aesthetic moments. Aesthetic moments are situations in which competing discourses transform and new meanings are given to the discourses (Baxter, 2011). In these scenarios, nonexpression and expression would blend together to form a new existence. No longer would nonexpression shift to expression and back again, but these two discourses would become whole and create new definitions together. These "relational experiences" occur when screenings where multiple senses are stimulated create an environment where nonexpression and expression exist together (Bolen, 2014, p. 141). 3D movie screenings resemble an aesthetic moment. Vivien recalls,

> I watched *Avatar* (2009) and this little kid was trying to reach for things and I thought it was really funny because he was just trying to grab everything. I thought it was cute. But 3D movies, compared to regular movies or that setting, your senses are more stimulated.

While 3D movies give a taste of an aesthetic moment, the newest innovation entirely characterizes an aesthetic moment. Edward shared,

> I'm from South Korea and I'm an international student and when I was in South Korea, their movie theater is like 4D, so chairs are moving and they appeal to your senses and those kinds of things. I watched *The Amazing Spiderman* (2012). It was really cool . . . The movie is moving. Chairs are moving so everyone was like, 'Wow!' So everyone there is really excited. That was my ideal experience.

In these screenings, noise becomes such a constant that nonexpression only exists to the extent that interactants want to be able to hear the dialogue on the screen. However,

nonexpression and expression are simultaneously desired. The wholeness created a new moviegoing experience (Bolen, 2014).

Welcome/unwelcome distractions. Feelings about movie theaters shift, in a dialectic sense, from favorable to unfavorable when the audience does not adhere to values in etiquette held by the majority of others in the theater. This speaks again of the notion of a diachronic separation, in which one discourse is dominant at one moment and marginalized at another (Baxter, 2011, p. 127). When such perceptions are not aligned, when audience members are not like-minded, when opinions about behavior clash, the experience becomes less of an event and more of a nightmare. Ideas about behavior when watching a horror movie might differ when some see the movie as an inspiration for wisecracks, while others might desire to be enticed by the emotions triggered by the fearful display of the movie. Judy recognizes such a scenario when stating,

> With scary movies, people will scream and fan themselves. It's always funny the different ways people react to the fear because some will watch the movie and they totally enjoy it, but they have to separate themselves. That's the only way I could ever watch scary movies. I have to separate myself from the experience because if I get too into it then I can't handle it.

Bette made a similar statement.

> I like to let the movie scare me. I enjoy that and when people are dumbing it down and making humor out of the scary, I'm like, 'Let me be scared. You're just kind of using humor to make yourself not scared, but let me be scared at least.'

The discursive struggle between expression and nonexpression is constantly in a state of flux as patrons attempt to negotiate expected norms based on momentary situations. Joan made

allowances for interruptions caused by humor if "It's just a good moment for one good joke and the theater actually laughs," but later stated "it becomes annoying if you think it's your stand-up hour."

Some feel this event is tarnished by distractions, shifting the dominant discourse of nonexpression back to the center of the interplay between the discourses (Baxter, 2011). Audible distractions account for much of the complaints about movie theaters in general. Participants cited several different types of distractions that detracted from their theatrical experience. Bette complained: "babies crying. I've had babies crying in the theater and you don't want to be like, 'okay, don't bring your kids to the movie theater,' but in a sense, you do not want babies crying during your movie." These distractions from others tend to tear away at the aura of a movie event. Cary supports this perception, bemoaning,

> I mean you're sitting there and you've spent all this money for you and your wife or your date or whatever to go to the theater and when me and my wife went and watched *The Lone Ranger* (2013) we looked forward to it. I mean we planned this event and somebody brought in a tribe of five-and-six-year-old kids that had no interest in the movie.

The shifting views of whether distractions are welcome or not, allowing for the feeling of an event or simply taking away from it, range depending on the co-constructed meanings given to the event in that space and at that particular moment.

The multiple causes of distractions include talking, texting, cell phones, babies, movement, over-active hormonal teenagers, etc., but perhaps the main culprit involves a shift in the dynamic of sensitivity toward others. While many participants felt measures could be set in place to help prevent audible and visual distractions, others felt a lack of respect for

others was simply a sign of momentary discourses within the culture. Humphrey suggested, "I still think it's the people. I don't think we are sociable and friendly like we used to be." If a general concept of movie theater etiquette is disproportionate from person to person, then it might be difficult to achieve a consensual atmosphere of idealized behaviors when viewing feature films.

Inconsistent Behaviors

A gap exists between perceptions of public etiquette among moviegoers, but another obstacle arises when behaviors of individuals differ from their own personal judgments about etiquette. When one person says one thing, yet does another, this illustrates a dialectic challenge that allows breaks in civil obedience and prohibits patrons from experiencing a romanticized version of movie theater etiquette. Often, participants admitted to behaviors that opposed expressed opinions about movie theater etiquette idealizations. Such inconsistencies present a "dynamic interplay of oppositions" in which a "both/and" quality (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996, p. 10) is desired by movie theater patrons. These inconsistencies reside in the discursive struggle between expression and nonexpression. Patrons wanted both the ability to express within a theater and nonexpression from others simultaneously.

Contradictions. Many audience members allow for breaks in etiquette when the transgression favors one's own interests. For instance, Katharine was quick to join in when other participants complained about people using their chairs as foot rests. Yet, she later revealed,

> When no one sits in front of you, you can have a foot rest because I'm not like one of those people. If no one sits in front of me, it's a good time. I can prop my feet up.

Katharine also supported the belief that all should come prepared when going to the movies to prevent distractions by suggesting you should,

> [know] your problem and [know] how to prepare for it ahead of time. If you know you're going to bring your toddler or your baby into the movie, you need to plan ahead of time. Like, 'I'm going to sit in this seat where I can get out of the movie theater quick enough to where I'm not bothering people,' you know.

Earlier, however, she complained of having to sit in the front rows of the theater and revealed,

> It's not really anyone else's fault I guess, but this happened one time when I went to the midnight showing of something so of course it was packed and I guess I didn't get my ticket ahead of time enough and so the only seats left in the theater were on the very front row.

The inconsistency of her beliefs and behavior demonstrates contradictions about movie theater etiquette perceptions and momentary habits.

Emergencies. While participants were quick to criticize others for using cell phones during movies, Bette disclosed,

> I know I use cell phones in movies for whatever. My parents will be like, 'where are you?' whenever I used to drive to San Angelo because I lived close by. Whenever I would drive to San Angelo my mom would blow up my phone, like, 'where are you,' 'are you okay,' and all this stuff. In that situation I would text her back or something, but I mean nowadays everyone just turns their brightness off and I've never been told not to have my phone out.

Katharine added, “Anytime I’m having a texting conversation I’m not just saying like ‘Hey, what’s up?’ There’s an actual purpose for the conversation if I am texting.” Marilyn admitted to cell phone transgressions and divulged, “I’m totally guilty of texting in my lap or under my leg and, you know, if that’s a distraction, I am guilty of it.” Claudette stated, “I’ve answered my phone before. People, like my parents, will blow up my phone calling five times in a row, so I’ll just answer it, but I’ll whisper.” When asked if that was okay, she stated that it was not. These examples allow for breaks in etiquette based off of the premise that certain circumstances, if important enough, trump the overall contentment of the audience in this public space. The co-constructed meanings of movie theater etiquette are ignored in favor of situations deemed as emergencies. The meanings given to circumstances described as emergencies, however, shift from moment to moment.

Emergencies do not only consist of medical problems or serious conditions. Interactants who feel the urge to urinate consider such issues another type of emergency. A popular cell phone application (app) from runpee.com (Matyszczyk, 2009) alerts moviegoers when to miss certain scenes during a movie if the bladder is full from slurping water, Gatorade, Icees, or carbonated beverages. Shirley stated the following:

> I also have this one app that I like using in theaters and it tells you when to go to the bathroom during the movie and it tells you if there’s anything right after the movie. Or if you’re running late and miss the first five minutes of the movie, it tells you what happens. So, I think that’s cool because I’ve only had that for the last year, but I use it all of the time.

While an app like this seems handy for moviegoers, the simple fact that it necessitates browsing one’s cell phone is noteworthy since most participants expressed how checking a

cell phone during a movie theater screening was a distracting behavior for others. Regardless of the emergency, participants often contradicted their own preferences for movie theater constructions when contemplating cell phone use within a theater.

> Shirley: If my phone's vibrating every twenty minutes and something's happening, I'd check it, but I mean I do the dim all the way.
>
> Maureen: Yeah. If you turn your brightness all the way down, nobody else will notice.
>
> Interviewer: What if it's just telling you to go pee at that moment?
>
> Shirley: I guess I better go.
>
> Ginger: I always check it, even if it's not important.
>
> Laurence: It kind of turns into a habit almost.
>
> Laurence: Like just to kind of check.
>
> Gregory: Because you won't know if it's important or not if you don't check it.

The significance of the cell phone message, even when moviegoers were unaware of the importance of the message, outweighed the significance of the desire to conform to socially constructed standards of behavior.

Less populated theaters. Distracting behaviors are excused by some when the screening is less crowded. If fewer interactants fill the theater, participants seem to feel that they can behave in a more relaxed manner, even if that means breaking certain perceived guidelines. Errol suggested that

> It depends on how many people are in the theater. If it's not enough people to bother and answer the phone and won't hurt anybody, then I will likely answer the phone. It's not a lot so it's not like I'd avoid it.

The less crowded theater even became a place for partners to engage in passionate acts. While complaining earlier of public displays of affection (PDA), certain participants seemed to excuse these acts if the theater was less crowded.

James: I would go to the release, like the oldest movie at the movie theater when nobody's there.

Errol: Nobody's there.

James: You can go with your girl and sit at the very back.

Errol: Hold her hand man.

James: Yeah.

Gary: You try to go watch something you've already seen.

James: Yeah, exactly, like the whole movie.

Gary: "What are you watching? Oh this, for the third time?"

Errol: "For the third time! It's really good!"

The right to "make out" or engage in acts of acts of affection in public, which was described as unallowable earlier, was positioned as allowable only if the theater was not filled up. A few interactants within the theater could be distracted, but this violation would not be acceptable if more interactants were around.

Economic factors. Co-constructed meanings given to movie theaters shift when the patrons alter meanings based on economic factors. The discursive struggle between expression and nonexpression takes a different dynamic when parties deem a screening as less valued based on the lower cost of admission. Participants disagreed on whether dominant social norms should remain or be negotiated in situations like this.

Interviewer: If you're at the super-duper IMAX and you've shelled out a lot of money, then etiquette is more important in that situation?

Marilyn: Maybe.

Elizabeth: I think it should be across the board.

Marilyn: Well, I would behave differently in a dollar theater than I would at the IMAX. I mean, I would probably be more likely to behave better at the IMAX theater than I would at the dollar theater. I'm ashamed of that. I'm not sure why.

Judy: If you're at the dollar theater and you're talking or you're cracking jokes and someone shushes you, you're like, 'We're at the dollar theater, calm down.'

Participants often disagreed on whether economic factors affected perceived norms of behavior. Some felt a lower price of admission allowed for distracting behaviors, while others felt guidelines should be static regardless of the situation.

Joan: If I was in an IMAX theater where you're already paying more for the IMAX, you're paying more for the 3D glasses, you're just paying more, then I expect better behavior than if I were at a second release theater. I do. I expect much better behavior because it's more, like my money investment. This is a freaking $16 ticket at this point. That's not cheap, you know?

Rita: Well, I guess it just kind of depends on what you're watching. Even if it's just a cheap theater, I still think you just need to be respectful to the other people around you. Those people that are constantly talking or on their phone, it's rude. I find it rude. If it's a cheap theater or the IMAX, don't do it. That's my opinion.

Joan: There's time where I've been to a cheap, seedy theater though and I'm like, 'someone is fucking back there. Someone is making babies, dang, while watching the movie.'

Interviewer: They should've paid an extra ticket.

Myrna, Jack, and Vivien also considered how economic factors affect behaviors in movie theaters.

Myrna: I think people will look at it like 'I paid nine dollars to be here. I want to pay attention and I don't want anyone to bother me while I'm watching a movie' to where if it was like $1.50, then a bunch of kids would go together and they would just be [louder].

Jack: That happened to me on Thanksgiving weekend. I went to the dollar movies to go see *Guardians of the Galaxy* (2014) just because it was awesome and so I went and there's a bunch of kids that are going in and out of the theater and they would just be [louder].

Vivien: Because it's, like, not a big deal to them.

Economic factors not only affected perceptions on behaviors, but they also affected actions. Patrons who felt the price of admission and the price of concessions were too high felt it was suitable to sneak in snacks when attending a movie. Despite attitudes that labeled such acts as unethical, participants felt it was justifiable to break these rules due to the high cost of a movie theater experience.

Interviewer: Would it change whether you sneak foods in or are you still planning on doing that?

Diane: I probably would still do that.

Paul: That's what I was going to say.

Julia: It's so expensive!

Paul: We're still broke college kids.

The socially constructed meanings given to a theater alter based on several factors, such as the economic ones discussed above.

Situational circumstances. Another cause of breaches in etiquette could simply be the thought that punishments are not enforced in theaters. With an anarchical atmosphere, anything it seems would be allowed. Katharine recalled an instance she broke social norms of etiquette during a visual warning about cell phones before the film started. She confided,

> They tell you. I have some of it memorized just because they play the same thing over. There's a part in it where they [say], 'We're going to do something if you don't put your phone up because we will.' Do you all remember that part during the previews? I've had my phone out in the movies before. Sorry guys, I'm guilty. None of the employees of the theater have ever come up to me and [said], 'Hey, you need to put your phone up' or anything. So, if they have that stuff in the previews and they say in the previews we're going to come kick you out, but then they don't enforce it, then it's like, 'oh well.'

Participants disagree on why certain behaviors might be favorable under certain conditions and with certain audiences, which seems to indicate that these attitudes and perceptions are in a constant state of flux. Nothing is ever concrete.

> Charlie: I think it totally depends on the movie that you're watching. There is an array of people and these different people act according to specific scenes in certain ways. It depends on what you're watching/who you're watching it with.

Joan: Can you give different circumstances?

Charlie: I mean different genres of movies might be just a good place to start.

Joan: Can I make out with the person next to me during a romance?

Charlie: Uh, it depends, right?

Joan: Am I allowed to overly scream during a horror film?

Charlie: It would be something that was more acceptable if you did it there versus if you did it during…

Joan: I'm not allowed to scream during romantic comedies?

Charlie: It's particularly based off the content of what's going on. You know?

This discursive struggle between wishing for idealized behaviors from others versus personally disregarding norms of behavior displays a dynamic where individuals place less value on the communal desires co-constructed by the patrons within the theater and instead prioritize contradictory desires. Interactants want both order from others and the freedom to disobey norms. Such desires shift, depending on several factors. This supports a theory suggesting the interplay of discursive struggles; this supports relational dialectics theory. As Charlie noted, "I'm almost wondering if more people did distracting behaviors, would each occurrence be as distracting." With everybody solely seeking an environment to fit conflicting needs and disregarding sensitivities toward others, idealized situations for movie theaters as far as behaviors are concerned seems like an uphill struggle.

Summary

Participants view movie theater behaviors as dualities of good and bad. Yet, these constructions often shifted, which resulted in participants expressing inconsistencies with their responses. The focus group participants expressed wishes that extended beyond

mediocrity and instead desired situations in which the ideal was present. They also considered the theater as an extension of the home. However, they did not appreciate when others behaved in similar ways. The inconsistencies expressed led to competing desires in which participants fluctuated from one desire to another, owing this dynamic to the interplay of discursive struggles. The participants often viewed a movie theater screening as a communal event. Often these events transcended the theater into a location where the carnivalesque prevailed, aesthetic moments emerged, or hybrids were constructed. In these situations, dominant discourses became decentered, new meanings were made for each discourse, or both discourses mixed to create a new definition. Finally, participants recalled experiences in which behaviors shifted from one chronotope to another. In each temporal/spatial instance, behaviors were dependent upon the social influence of the atmosphere present, the social constructions of past experiences, and understandings of anticipated responses to these behaviors. The meanings that can be made for movie theater preferences are polemical; they are never situated as one concrete agreement between interactants. In these polemical discourses, "discourses are in play in a competitive, opposing manner" (Baxter, 2011, p. 138). Despite desires among the participants for a certain form of etiquette that could blanket over each movie theater screening, the continuous struggle between the competing discourses concerning movie theater behaviors makes any notion of a script to follow while screening a movie unlikely. The show must go on, but the script is never the same.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

With so many shifting desires, preferences for movie theater behaviors could be equated to the temperature on a thermometer. The temperature is only present momentarily, but it can only be made possible through the interplay of the struggles tugging it each way. Similarly, utterances never sit at one concrete location. Utterances can be understood, instead, as always containing utterances from the culture at hand and from the other interactants in the movie theater. Each moviegoer that goes to the movies behaves in ways that experiences of the past have taught, in ways that the social influence of the present atmosphere deem as acceptable, and in ways that anticipated utterances of the future might dictate. Behaviors are never the decision of one isolated individual. Behaviors are the result of the discursive struggles within/between the relationships we share.

For this study, I used relational dialectics theory to examine the discursive struggles that emerge concerning movie theater behaviors. I utilized a focus group methodology to analyze participant responses to questions concerning movie theater etiquette. I recorded the participants, transcribed the focus group discussions, and coded the text to search for themes within the data. Several themes emerged within the data, including thematic lines of idealizing movie theater expectations, situating theaters as extensions of one's home, expressing clashes of desires within theaters, transcending theaters into events, and reporting inconsistent behaviors. Utterances concerning movie theater etiquette are linked by four distinct forms, known as the utterance chain: distal already-spokens (from the culture at large), distal not-yet spokens (anticipated responses from generalized others), proximal already-spokens (past interactions with immediate relational parties), and proximal not-yet-

spokens (anticipated responses from an immediate relational party). Meaning making happens through the utterance chain (Baxter, 2011). The discursive struggles of movie theater etiquette, such as expression-nonexpression, autonomy-connection, and inclusion-seclusion, are not opposing discourses. Rather, they are unified. Meaning making is achieved "from the interplay of competing discourses" that simultaneously struggle for power through centripetal and centrifugal forces (Baxter, 2011, p. 121). Therefore, participants who discussed questions concerning movie theater etiquette during the focus groups for this research reported shifting desires, inconsistent behaviors, and momentary preferences. These contradictions emerged due to a desire to have both one preference of behavior and another desire simultaneously with momentary shifts of power that centered one discourse at one moment and another the next moment. Relational dialectics theory provided me a framework to analyze the shifts in power between competing discourses during moments when parties assemble together, in particular when interactants collect together in the public space of the movie theater.

Interpretation of Findings

I used Baxter's (2011) relational dialectics theory as a lens to seek an understanding of discursive struggles that emerge when interactants assemble together in movie theaters. I posed three research questions in Chapter 2. I questioned (a) whether perceptions of idealizations contradict personal behaviors, (b) whether expectations of others correlate with personal behaviors, and (c) whether idealizations remain the same for every movie theater experience.

In research question one, I asked if one's perceptions about movie theater idealizations contradict one's personal behaviors. Perhaps when an interactant makes

contradictions between preferences and behaviors, it is not an act of hypocrisy. Rather, it may be a case in which the interactant is unknowingly shifting between discourses, which are always simultaneously present. Discourses are often in competition and this competition results in "possible differences of meaning" (Baxter, 2011, p. 75). The multitude of possible meanings contributes to the likelihood of contradictions. Contradictions appear when an interactant behaves in ways that contradict previously stated preferences. Thus, when participants expressed a desire for no cell phone use within a theater but later found justifications for personal cell phone use, they were not choosing between two oppositions. Rather, with much more complexity, they were struggling with a "dynamic interplay or tension between the unified oppositions" (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996, p. 10). Participants were not leaning toward an "either/or" emphasis, but instead toward a "both/and" emphasis (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996, p. 10). They wanted both an environment free of distracting technology and an environment in which personal choices concerning cell phone use were fluid. They wanted both less talking from fellow audience members and a communal feel to the screening environment where expression was welcome. They wanted both privacy and seclusion from others within a public space and the ability to prop their feet on the seat in front of them while feeling at home within the theater. Therefore, one's perceptions about movie theater idealizations often contradict one's personal behaviors. However, this is a result of the multiplicity of meanings possible concerning movie theater idealizations and the fluidity of desires that stem from unified oppositions. Just as indecisive as a moviegoer can be when deciding whether to purchase candy or popcorn and when choosing beverages, moviegoers will also behave in contradictory ways when seeking to correspond with shifting idealizations of movie theater behaviors.

A popular idiom in the Western world stresses "do as I say, not as I do" (Selden, 1689, p. 93). For research question two, I asked if moviegoers expect idealized behaviors from others while not behaving according to the same idealized expectations. My findings suggest parties want others to act in ways that contradict with their own behaviors. Preferences for movie theater behaviors are no different. Interactants in a movie theater want both a desirable atmosphere in which other members of the audience behave in idealized ways and the freedom to behave in ways free of any concrete guidelines. Baxter, Braithwaite, Bryant, and Wagner (2004) report, "a relational-dialectics approach focuses on the dialogic 'both-and' of relating, in contrast to an 'either-or' logic" (p. 449). They stress that "contradiction should not be mistaken for disagreement in which one party adopts one viewpoint and the second party adopts the opposite view—attitude against attitude. Instead, contradiction refers to the simultaneous opposing demands or 'pulls' that constitute their relationship" (p. 448). Similarly, contradictory allowances for behaviors between one interactant and a fellow moviegoer also sit within a relationship that is dependent upon the simultaneous struggles between the competing discourses. In other words, an interactant can desire for nonexpression from a fellow moviegoer while later desiring for the ability to behave in ways in accordance with expression. Several instances of contradictory desires between preferred behaviors for others and desires for personal behaviors emerged in the focus group discussion.

The study reveals several displeasures with the occurrences at movie theaters resulting from the discursive struggles between the interplay of socially constructed norms and conflicting behaviors. Distractions led to a negative reaction when seeking to enjoy a cinematic release. Participants noted how these distractions were undesirable, obtrusive, and

concerning. Negativity was aimed at the distraction and the perpetrator guilty of the transgression. Distractions and deviant behaviors became stigmatized in movie theaters (Goffman, 1963b). However, inconsistencies existed between expressed desires and executed behaviors. The distractions were described as so severe that very few felt a need to continue to obey implied rules for behaviors. Most participants gave instances in which they were responsible for breaks in perceived norms. In situations in which the participant was on the receiving end of a distracting behavior, the participant responded negatively to the perceived transgression. In situations in which the participant was the perpetrator guilty of the breach, the participant allowed for interruptions in perceived guidelines for movie theater behaviors based on certain justifications. Participants behaved in ways that the community around them indicated as allowable. The "expression/nonexpression" (Baxter, 2011, p. 75) contradiction showed inconsistencies of personal moviegoing desires based on situational occurrences.

In research question three, I asked if idealizations of movie theater behaviors remain the same for every temporal/spatial situation. Interactants shifted between competing desires as certain discursive struggles were privileged due to a centripetal pull. Yet, centrifugal forces often regained power when participants desired to personally engage in behaviors traditionally perceived as undesirable. This does not mean that the interactant changed from one desire to another since both desires were always present. However, the centrifugal-centripetal pulls of each utterance results in one utterance holding temporary power over the other. This power is never absolute. When attention is given to issues of power concerning discursive struggles of movie theater behaviors, "the unequal discursive playing field" is "marked by centripetal and centrifugal" forces (Baxter, 2011, p. 150). Traditionally, nonexpression, privacy, seclusion, and autonomy hold positions of power within movie

theaters. However, when interactants behave in ways that contradict expressed desires for others, they are not choosing an alternate behavior. Instead, they are fluctuating between two unified discourses that struggle with centripetal and centrifugal positioning. Interactants, thus, behave in ways that contradict idealized behaviors they possess for others. Yet, I use relational dialectics theory not to add more power to favored discourses in movie theaters. Instead, my paramount goal is to examine how dialogic understandings can provide the potential for new meanings to be made, for new ways of living, and for alternative ways of understanding. This becomes possible when participants make claims that suggest that idealizations for movie theater behaviors do not remain the same for every temporal/spatial situation.

Discursive struggles lead to disagreements concerning idealized behaviors in a movie theater. Moviegoers perceive certain behaviors as desirable and others as undesirable. Certain discourses are centered in the struggle for idealized forms of movie theater behaviors: nonexpression, seclusion, privacy, and autonomy, to name a few. This repetitious insistence that such behaviors are preferable moves the conversation from a subjective viewpoint to a case in which the behaviors are perceived as objectively better than competing behaviors (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). As these discourses become constructed as advantageous, others are situated on the outside of the center. Participants often gave examples of desiring noise-free environments that excluded cell phones, talking during the presentation, any violation of personal space, and distractions from children. Such preferences presented a picture in which a certain atmosphere was desired within a movie theater, one full of specific idealizations that favored certain discourses and positioned others as undesirable. Yet, the discourses are not polar opposites. They function together through an interplay that produces

meanings for the utterances within a movie theater. In this way, the utterance of nonexpression can only be understood through the simultaneous utterance of expression. Nonexpression within a movie theater does not always mean what interactants assume. Nonexpression can, indeed, mean privacy within a public space in order to focus entirely on the feature film being presented. However, nonexpression can also mean that an interactant is bored, sleepy, or not feeling well. Expression can also have different meanings. Moviegoers might be seeking attention in ways that distract from the screening, but they might also desire a more communal feel to the theatrical experience. Each of these discourses contains utterances of past moviegoing experiences, utterances from the temporal moment at hand, and utterances of anticipated reactions from both the immediate audience members and others from the culture at large.

Contradictions concerning idealizations are multiple. Many participants complained of cell phone violations within movie theaters. For instance, Natalie spoke of how an idealized environment would include "peace and quiet," but she later divulged that she was the cause of the delay for a movie screening when staff members hesitated to begin the movie after seeing that she was on her cell phone during a public service announcement encouraging moviegoers to turn off their phones. Paul also stated that it was annoying when "that one person" distracts others during a screening, but later positioned behaviors as dependent upon social influence regarding whether certain behaviors were allowable or prohibited. He also stated that cell phone use was okay if someone is "just whipping it out, looking at it, and putting it back." Paul shifted on idealizations of movie theater behaviors and gave situations in which he would be willing to break norms of behavior he viewed as characteristic of an idealized viewing. These contradictions make professed idealizations

concerning movie theater behaviors difficult to understand. Participants express one preference, but behave in contradictory ways. Therefore, it is unclear whether participants, such as Natalie and Paul, desire an environment prohibiting cell phone use or one that allows for personal use of technology.

Another perceived violation during a movie theater screening is loud chatter from other interactants. Talking is considered to be one of the biggest distractions during feature film presentations (Fuchs, 2013; Zhiwei, 2006). Participants, such as Russell, were displeased when moviegoers would distract from the theatrical presentation and complained that these violators felt that rules "[do not] apply to them." Russell complained that these moviegoers were not "in sync with what's going on in the film." Yet, later Russell admitted that if someone said something funny during a movie, that he would "probably be one of the people laughing along with it." Russell behaved by laughing after reporting several instances in which he behaved by complaining. Participants struggle with the discursive struggle of expression-nonexpression. Talking might distract moviegoers during a movie screening, but talking also promotes community. When participants behave in ways that position talking as undesirable, they lean toward autonomy, closedness, privacy, seclusion, and nonexpression. When they behave in ways that favor talking, they are favoring community. In those situations, they lean toward connection, openness, disclosure, inclusion, and expression. These discursive struggles should not be considered a behavioral choice, but rather "a meaningful symbolic act" (Baxter, 2011, p. 77). The act symbolizes the struggle between/with the interplay of unified oppositions. Expression and nonexpression are always simultaneously present as interactants struggle with/through these competing discourses.

Personal space was another issue discussed by the participants. Jean complained of moviegoers "kicking the back of [her] seat" while Doris fussed about moviegoers "sharing your arm [rest]." Yet, Doris later admitted that during a horror film screening, she "actually grabbed a guy" sitting next to her. This contradiction and many others expressed during the focus group discussions is situated within/between the discursive struggle of autonomy versus connection. Moviegoers want to feel at home. They desire a personal space within a public atmosphere. They seek a theatrical viewing reminiscent of a home screening (Kwon, Kim, Chung, Ko, & Lee, 2015). Yet, idealizing this discourse is not always a static state within preferences for movie theater behaviors. Many of the same participants expressed discontent with other moviegoers who frequently went back and forth to their seats, who kicked or placed their feet on the moviegoer's chair, or who violated perceived guidelines concerning personal space, reported behaviors in which they were guilty of the same violations. James even stated that he sometimes preferred screenings where the theater "was full of couches, like big couches, and people just take off their shoes and watch a movie." Temporary desires toward comfort compete against momentary desires for limitations that prevent others from touching you, kicking you, or getting too close to you. The utterance is fleeting. Each utterance concerning movie theater idealizations is situated in a struggle where competing discourses cause desires to shift. With a dialogic understanding, "the focus is on the utterance chain rather than the utterance, per se" (Baxter, 2011, p. 93). The desire of the moment is only temporary, dependent upon situational circumstances, and as desires shift, contradicting behaviors emerge.

A common complaint among the focus group participants was noise caused by children or infants. Jane complained that "a baby was crying during the movie," but later

fondly recalled an experience in which a community feeling filled the theater when "everyone was crying" during a screening of *Marley & Me* (2008). Kirk did not appreciate when kids were present during a theatrical screening, but he admitted that he would not listen if "some kid looked at [him]" when referring to teenage movie theater staff. Kids were viewed as both an unwelcome audience within movie theaters and a certain type of population that should at the same time follow the idealized behaviors for movie theater screenings. While kids lack the maturity of older moviegoers, participants still insisted that they, or more often their parents, should ensure that perceived notions of movie theater etiquette were followed. Doris admitted that "[she was] a talker" during movie screenings. However, kids were not allotted the same freedoms. Participants indicated that they wanted kids to watch kid movies. Much of this is a result of utterances of the distal past in which moviegoers recall experiences where kids were distracting or even when they themselves were younger and distracting (Baxter, 2011). Gene admitted that he was "a bit more rowdy when [he] was younger." Perhaps participants are blaming all children for behaviors they engaged in when younger. There are instances in which children behave during a movie theater screening. Yet, this population is marginalized within the movie theater for anticipated violations of nonexpression. At the same time, children are held to the same standards of etiquette that moviegoers deem as ideal under certain situations. The problem is idealizations for movie theater behaviors shift, resulting in the impossibility of one concrete standard of etiquette. Participants reported contradictory behaviors of expression in adolescent years in contrast to current idealizations of movie theater etiquette as adults. This was because, as James stated, "everybody's a lot more mature" now. While the age of the moviegoer is one factor to consider, inconsistencies between desires and actions remain an

important consideration when examining whether or not interactants behave according to their own idealizations for movie theater behaviors.

Much of the feelings about idyllic scenarios for movie theater experiences involved self-serving desires. The participants revealed idealized scenarios as the most desirable environment for a movie theater, insinuating that movie theater experiences would be enjoyed most if they better suited socially constructed norms of etiquette. The participants also indicated a tendency to incorporate the movie theater into an extension of their own home, treating it as property rather than public domain. Distractions were most unappreciated when they interfered with socially constructed norms. Other instances, in which such distractions were perceived to complement an event-like feel to the movie theater experience, excused distractions because they did not interfere with normative opinions about what did or did not tarnish theatrical experiences. This polyvalence illustrates a contradiction in which participants revealed attitudes that often clashed with their own behaviors, depending on the temporal attitude of each circumstance. A discursive struggle between "inclusion/seclusion" (Baxter, 2011, p. 61) played out as moviegoers desired different circumstances for each isolated scenario. In short, the degree of dissatisfaction with movie theater experiences seemed to depend solely on whether the experience met the standards of the co-constructed norms given to movie theater etiquette at that particular moment.

The distractions from others led to a negative critique of the theatrical experience. However, when the participants themselves took advantage of the shortage of regulations, allowances were made for such inequities. Again, a contradictory, polyvalent stance emerged that demonstrated shifts in allowances for etiquette. Participants demonstrated wishes for a simultaneous "both/and" (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996, p. 10) contradiction of behaviors.

Participants seemed to have concrete, static opinions of what movie theater etiquette was, but also had fluid ideas of which behaviors were allowable for each particular circumstance.

My research on desirable movie theater behaviors does not lead to social change on a macro level. In seeking new meanings and alternative possibilities, I am not making food readily available for starving populations in economically challenged areas. I am not freeing marginalized others from oppression. I am not changing the discourse on racial prejudice, heteronormativity, patriarchal dominance, or other societal problems of paramount importance. The efficacy of this research is of a smaller scale. My research, instead, functions on the micro level. By examining the discourse of movie theater etiquette, I am able to analyze the meanings that are made when interactants assemble together under the premise of carefree entertainment. These experiences occur in everyday situations, momentary events that seem fleeting. Yet, the utterances of the moment possess the potential for transformative change. Discourses concerning appropriate and inappropriate behaviors within the public space of a movie theater involve languages that seek to create limitations of expression and behavior. Language is important because "language is capable of transcending the reality of everyday life altogether" (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, p. 40). We must be aware that in granting power to one construction, we create limitations for how we can behave. These discursive struggles are interdependent in the process of meaning making. Therefore, the desirable behaviors within a movie theater are not opposites of less desirable behaviors. They exist with/in/between each other. Gergen (2009) informs that "in constructing a desirable world together, we simultaneously create an alternative world of the less than desirable" (p. 110). In constructing this less than desirable world, we position these

behaviors, and often those guilty of them, as unworthy of value. Our axiological positioning functions to marginalize certain behaviors and certain populations.

This seems like a simple solution: If certain interactants are guilty of certain behaviors that are deemed undesirable, then those behaviors and those parties should be regulated. What this assumption fails to consider is the fluidity of such desires for behaviors within a public space. We struggle with desires for the temporal location while simultaneously feeling compelled to modify behaviors to understandings of past experiences. With new assemblages of moviegoers, we develop new relationships. As Gergen (2009) states, "in each of these relationships we have developed a unique pattern of understanding" (p. 112). What is undesirable is not destined to be so; instead, our relationships deem what is to be favored and what is to be scorned. Furthermore, instead of viewing these preferences as absolute and normal, we must understand that when we create a "consensus around what is real and good, classes of the undesirable are under construction" (Gergen, 2009, p. 114). When we can understand that certain behaviors are not always viewed as distracting, that certain desires shift depending on the moment and the relationships within the theater, and that discourses consistently compete for power between unified oppositions, new understandings can be reached. Our communication must continue to reach for new meanings. Gergen (2009) emphasizes that "there is value, then, in sustaining processes of communication in which meaning is never frozen or terminated, but remains in a continuous state of becoming" (p. 121). Our idealizations concerning movie theater behaviors are always in a state of becoming, never resting on one concrete understanding of which behaviors are ideal.

This task of creating avenues for alternative understandings does not happen in one chronotopic moment. Instead, continuous experiences in which normative ways of thinking are challenged create the potential for transformation. I use relational dialectics theory in order to emphasize that "different genres of communication vary in their dialogic potential" (Baxter, 2011, p. 150). Every time an audience collects together in a movie theater, new meanings are made. This momentary event contains the potential to add another layer to the utterance chain. If alternatives can be achieved in the discourse of movie theater etiquette, moviegoers may find the ability to allow for a variety of options concerning behaviors during a theatrical screening. More instances of compassion prevailing over polemical attacks might occur. This can make the difference between a pleasant or unpleasant movie theater experience, and it can also have a much greater impact, making instances in which movie theater violence occurs less frequently. The relationships formed within a movie theater are usually not as meaningful as relationships we share with loved ones, but those relationships can make the difference between generous acts during a momentary experience and kind gestures, which might actually prevent an act of violence in a movie theater. Our existing discourses often lead to disagreements on which behaviors are appropriate, when transgressions are allowable, and when both competing discourses can "form a sense of completion" or an "'I-Thou' relation" (Baxter, 2004, p. 187). I hope that this research can give a push toward alternative options, new understandings, and transformative change. Baxter (2011) states, "the dialogic project is most interested in those occasions when new meanings are wrought from existing systems of meanings-occasions of transformation through hybrids or aesthetic moments" (p. 150). It is in those moments that new stories can

emerge both from the flickering lights on the screen and within the aisles of the theater in/among/between the moviegoers through dialogic possibilities.

Limitations of Research

One limitation of this research stemmed from the isolated location of the research participants. The participants all attended the same university and mostly comprised one age bracket. According to Nielsen (2013), 15% of all moviegoers are 18 to 24 years old. Yet, 95% of the focus group participants for this study were 18 to 24 years old. This highly-represented age group does not sufficiently represent the wide range of ages of moviegoing patrons, allowing for a false representation of prevailing perceptions. Sampling participants from an isolated location does not benefit from geographical differences. Many of the participants could not answer a focus group prompt about the effect of geographical location on movie theater behaviors because many of them had not seen a film too far beyond the confines of their current location. Conducting focus groups in many different locations would provide some insight into the relationship between location and movie theater behaviors. For instance, participants from a larger city, such as New York, might have different moviegoing experiences. The participants I sampled for this research shared similar experiences from similar movie theaters. The dynamic of the research could differ if participants had been sampled from multiple locations, including larger metropolitan areas.

Age representations for the focus groups were not ideal. While a few outliers managed to contribute unique perspectives on movie theater behaviors, most of the participants were of a younger age bracket. Participants were all college students as well. While movie attendance in a small city that is strengthened by the presence of a mid-sized university benefits from college-aged moviegoers, movie attendance on a national scale is

represented by a much larger audience than the demographic typical of college students. This sample also represents a certain population with economic privileges. College is expensive and those who enroll in higher education often tend to come from more privileged families. This representation would exclude members of the population with little money to attend college, but who frequent movie theater screenings and share in the experiences that contribute to constructions of idealized movie theater behaviors. Unique audiences such as these might have differing opinions concerning movie theater distractions and idealized behaviors.

Another limitation included the lack of methods utilized for the research. While I believe that focus groups presented the best method for gathering data concerning perceptions of movie theater behaviors, other methods may have added to the knowledge collected. For instance, one-on-one interviews may have allowed for participants to provide deeper responses to the prompts. With so many participants involved in each focus group, participants might have felt pressured to give shorter responses. Their responses might have been interrupted by other participants. Ultimately, participants might not have had enough time to provide a thorough response to the questions concerning movie theater behaviors.

Finally, the scope of the study might have presented a limitation to this research. I can analyze discursive struggles in movie theater etiquette to comprehend micro levels of relational struggles. However, I was not able to examine larger social issues with this type of research. Matters of social change were not present in the research. Instead, I was guided in this study by smaller examples of everyday, momentary experiences. This study should be recognized as a small step toward more eventful moments in which transitional change is more possible.

Ultimately, I believe that major shifts in dominant discourses are made possible by the mundane, everyday moments, such as a trip to the movie theater. While larger movements toward social change are desired, such movements rarely transpire. I also feel that focus groups still present the most advantageous method when seeking to examine discursive struggles due to the multivocality present and the ability of participants to gain strength from each other's comments. I believe a focus group methodology can allow a researcher to better understand relational issues due to the communal quality of focus groups.

Future Possibilities

As previously stated, future possibilities could include focus groups in multiple locations and comprising much more than the typical age range of undergraduate university students. This would allow for multiple opinions from a variety of age groups and from participants extending beyond one isolated location. Conducting focus groups in many different locations would help give some insight into the regional behavior of theaters.

Another possibility for future research could include one-on-one interviews to receive more in-depth analysis of a particular subject's beliefs about movie theater etiquette. While the focus group method provides a unique dynamic for this study, solitary interviews would add another component. It could provide an alternate form of analysis which would not benefit from the combination of ideas presented by the focus group method, but it could instead provide advantages in the form of a more detailed discussion without breaks and interruptions. Specialized participants could be reached through the interview method, including varying participants with different levels of associations with movie theaters. By adding to the process with a multitude of methods, the overall analysis would be aided with diverse opportunities for obtaining research.

Future research could analyze different areas in which discursive struggles emerge between relating parties. Movie theaters are only one area in which interactants assemble together in a public space. Future work could include examining areas where relational dialectics theory has already shown to be beneficial: universities, family relationships, intimate relationships, and work environments. However, areas with less existing research should be studied. These areas include: online role playing relationships, parasocial relationships, and interspecies friendships involving pets.

Particular aspects of relational dialectics theory should be studied further. Very little research has been done on answerability, hybridization, the carnivalesque, and aesthetic moments in public spaces, much less within movie theaters. These are the processes that lead to transformative change, so a high degree of importance should be placed on future studies of these praxiological processes. Bolen (2014) notes, "although aesthetic moments are featured in Baxter's work, little else has been done" (p. 142). More research should examine the processes that lead to fleeting moments of wholeness in which competing discourses share equal positioning in the struggle for dominance.

Baxter (2011) claims that a theory is "like a living organism" in that it never stops becoming and constantly changes (p. 180). Relational dialectics theory shows how discourses concerning movie theater behaviors also constantly shift. These idealizations move from one expectancy to another, but never sit in a single location long enough to allow for a concrete notion of movie theater etiquette. Baxter's (2011) work "[provides] researchers with new conceptual and methodological tools" so that relational dialectics theory can continue to grow (p. 180). In a similar way, future research should lead investigators in directions that

will improve upon matters of discursive struggles of other types of phenomena, including movie theater etiquette and the idealized behaviors within a movie house.

Conclusion

The dynamic interplay between the discursive struggles concerning movie theater etiquette present a tension for patrons within the public space of a movie theater. Socially embedded norms are placed upon occupants by discourses in the distal already-spoken link of Baxter's utterance chain (Baxter, 2011, p. 53). Moviegoers struggle with these constantly shifting norms. This results in the competition of opposing behaviors. Baxter and Montgomery (1996) spoke of such a "dynamic interplay of oppositions" (p. 10), one which plagues the desires and behaviors of moviegoing patrons. In the space of a movie theater, interactants co-construct the meanings given to this public space and these meanings are constantly in flux. Discursive struggles between expression and nonexpression allow for shifting meanings given to the theater. Moviegoers struggle between inclusion and seclusion. An antagonistic conflict appears when these meanings change, which is often the case within the constantly-shifting concept of a movie theater (Baxter, 2011, p. 132).

The problem of breaks in movie theater etiquette remains. Distractions such as chatter, invasion of space, audible noise, and electronic devices have left their mark on the cinematic experience. An integral part of the moviegoing experience, it now seems, is the inevitable contact with such types of distractions (Fuchs, 2013; Zhiwei, 2006). As interactants favor seclusion and as technological advances allow for more intrusions to interrupt movies, an idealized realization of an annoyance-free cinematic experience seems less and less likely. Participants gave insights into the problems that persist, problems they helped actively co-construct. They gave an understanding of attitudes about the problems, the

perceived causes, and the impact these problems have on movie theaters in general. Participants revealed a utopian-like desire for an idealized screening experience. They disclosed instances of guilty behaviors. They demonstrated how they tend to visualize the theater as an extension of home. They exemplified polyvalent attitudes about crowd interaction, a discursive struggle between allowing for such interaction and disapproving it based on situational circumstances. The simultaneous impulse toward two seemingly contradictory desires for behaviors characterized the dialectical tensions stressed by Baxter and Montgomery (1996) in postulating relational dialectics theory.

The wishes and desires of occupants within a movie theater setting are diverse, complex, and constantly in a state of flux. Moviegoers do not hold one static set of desires, but they shift from one idealization to another in the constant struggle. As members of this space perform the rituals of a movie theater experience, they are actively participating as role players in the construction of this social activity. They negotiate their roles differently under each individual circumstance, which creates a complex conceptualization of which behaviors should or should not be favored. This complex conceptualization is due to the contradictory tendencies displayed by moviegoers in each temporal-spatial circumstance. The process is constantly shifting as moviegoers seek to construct the social norms of movie theater behaviors.

Many revealed how the home screening experience is now more valued than the movie theater experience in several ways. With such talk, one might assume that the future of movie theaters is in jeopardy. However, the participants were not quick to come to such conclusions. They spoke of the movie theater as an event that could not be replicated at home. Despite distractions and flaws attributed to breaks in normative behavior, the

participants still saw hope for movie theaters. As Bette expressed, “I don’t think if I had a bad experience I [wouldn’t] go back to the theater.” This drama is playing out in movie theaters in a repetitive fashion. Competing discourses struggle between abiding by socially constructed norms for movie theater behaviors and allowances for contradictory behaviors perceived as breaks in etiquette. It allows for a variety of roles to be played out. Either way, it will be interesting to see which drama plays out when the light dims and the feature film begins the next time a visit is made to the local movie theater.

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Appendix A

Focus Group Discussion

about Movie Theatre Etiquette

slots available Monday – Friday,

December 1-5 @ 5 P.M.

(about 45 minutes)

free pizza and drinks!

This session will be recorded via digital recorder

to be used in a study about Movie Theatre Etiquette.

Only information about your age, gender, race, and college status

will be used in the study.

To volunteer, call [redacted]

Appendix B

Focus Group Guide

Introduction – 10 minutes

I want to thank you for volunteering for this focus group discussion. My name is John Marc Cuellar and I will be posing questions for you this evening. I am a Communication Graduate student. We will be talking about movie theater behaviors in an attempt to learn more about perceptions of this particular public expectation. I do want to remind you that this project is completely voluntary and you may choose to discontinue the discussion at any time. This conversation will be recorded by a digital recorder. Your participation in this project is completely confidential and I will not use your names for any part of this project. Only your comments will be noted. Also, if you wish to find out the results of this study you may contact me after the spring semester or by April 27 for a complete analysis of my project. As a gesture of appreciation, I am offering pizza for everybody tonight, along with drinks. I thank you once again for your cooperation and now we will continue with a few ground rules.

Ground Rules

In order to comply with confidentiality and to make this experience more beneficial to you all, I would like to suggest that what we discuss in this room stay in this room, at least in regard to breaking someone's confidentiality. How do you all feel about that?

It is important to allow for all kinds of opinions tonight. Our goal is not to create dissension, but to obtain a variety of opinions.

It is important to stress your opinion. If you feel differently than another, please address the issue rather than the individual.

Are there any questions?

Review process for focus group discussion

I have a series of questions or prompts I will ask in the attempt to open up a conversation about movie etiquette. Once I ask a question or give a prompt, please feel free to enter the discussion with your opinion.

Feel free to talk to everybody in this room, not just with me.

Every now and then I may jump back into the conversation to guide the discussion or send us down another path.

Today we have scheduled 30 minutes or more for this discussion. I do not expect it to last too long, but the duration will be guided by the quality of the discussion.

Questioning Route: Opening Question – 30 minutes

Let's begin by talking about our past movie experiences. Tell me about a bad experience you have had at a movie theater.

Tell me about an ideal experience you have had in the past at the movie theater.

How are you supposed to behave in a movie theater?

Tell me about some distractions you've encountered while watching a movie.

We have all stated some things that bother us about movie theaters. Tell me which of these things stands out as the worst type of distraction for you.

How do you feel a certain type of movie might affect behaviors while watching a movie?

Are there any other outside factors you feel contribute to distracting behaviors?

Are some people allowed to behave in distracting ways?

What you have done in the past when someone is disruptive?

When someone interferes with your enjoyment of a movie, whose responsibility is it to correct these behaviors?

How do distracting behaviors affect your perceptions of movie theaters?

a. How has it affected the frequency in which you attend movies?

b. How has it affected the types of movies you attend or the time of day you attend?

c. How has it affected your likelihood to attend on a Friday night or an opening night?

As it relates to behaviors, does it make a difference if you are in San Angelo or a larger city, like New York, when watching a movie?

How do you feel behaviors in movie theaters have changed compared to when you were younger?

What would be the cause of the changes in movie theater behaviors over the years?

Tell me about a time you have been guilty of distracting behaviors in the past.

Tell me any exceptions you feel would justify distracting behaviors?

Can you describe a situation in which you would use a cell phone during a movie?

How will thinking about distracting behaviors affect your future behaviors in a movie theater?

How do you feel behaviors within a movie theater can be improved?

Conclusion – 10 minutes

Wrap up conversation and close the discussion.

This concludes the focus group discussion. Are there any final comments you would like to make?

Before we leave, there are a few things I would like to mention again.

First, please remember to protect individual confidentiality when you leave. Can we all agree on that?

Second, thank you very much for your participation. I appreciate your time, comments, and cooperation. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me. Remember that if you are interested to learn about the results of this study, the study will be complete by April 27 and you can contact me after that to learn more. I am indebted to you all. To offer my appreciation, please feel free to grab a piece of pizza or two, along with a drink. Thank you so very much for your help!

Appendix C

Angelo State University
Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Consent to Participate in an IRB-Approved Research Event

Project Title: Movie Etiquette: Discursive Struggles with Co-Constructed Norms of Behaviors
Investigator Name/Department: John Marc Cuellar and Dr. Derek M. Bolen/Communication Department
Investigator Phone: [redacted] cell phone)

You are being asked to participate in a research event conducted with the approval of the Angelo State University Institutional Review Board (and if applicable, other relevant IRB committees). In order to participate, you are required to give your consent by reading and signing this document.

The investigator will explain to you in detail the purpose of the project, the procedures to be used, and the potential benefits and possible risks of participation. You may ask any questions you have at any time before the project begins. A basic explanation of the project is written below. Please read and, should you decide to participate, sign this form in the presence of the person who explained the project to you. Upon request, you will be given an unsigned copy of this form for your records.

Refusal to participate in this study will have no effect on any future services you may be entitled to from the University. Anyone who agrees to participate in this study is free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. I understand also that it is not possible to identify all potential risks in an experimental procedure, and I believe that reasonable safeguards have been taken to minimize both the known and potential but unknown risks.

1. Nature and Purpose of the Project

This study is to gather information on personal feelings toward movie theater behaviors. The study will seek to learn about personal movie theater experiences, attitudes, and opinions. Also of interest is how personal perceptions about movie theater behaviors affects both the behaviors of those individuals in such a setting and the feelings expressed when others behave in ways opposite of those personally held beliefs.

2. Explanation of Procedures.
Participation in this experiment is voluntary. No negative treatment or ramifications will be assigned should you refuse to participate or discontinue your participation with the study. You will discuss your feelings about movie theater behaviors in a focus group. The focus group will consist of about 6-8 participants and will last anywhere from 30 minutes to about an hour. You will be compensated for your time with pizza, beverages, and a movie theater gift card. This session will be recorded by a digital recorder. After the focus group, the discussion will be transcribed personally and coded for emerging themes. The interaction in these discussions, along with emerging themes, will be used as the data for this study. The completed report will be available to view on April 27.

3. Discomfort and Risks.

Participants who participate in the focus group will suffer no more harm than that which they would encounter in everyday life. If you feel uncomfortable, you have the right to leave the discussion at any moment with no consequences for your actions. Any participant who suffers extreme psychological trauma as a result of the discussion will be directed to the Angelo State University Counseling Service at (325) 942-2171.

4. Benefits.

The study will give insight about the feelings of others toward movie theater behaviors. The study will gain information on the behaviors of patrons in movie theaters and their rationale for such behaviors. It will help to provide data on perceptions of movie theater etiquette and how those perceptions affect the ways parties behave in public spaces. The study will help gain a better understanding about the discursive struggles movie patrons encounter as they shift from one construction of movie theater etiquette to another, as do those around them. It will allow for the finding of themes and categories in relation to perceptions of movie theater behaviors.

5. Confidentiality.

Participants will not be named or identified in the study. Other than information about general age, gender, race, and college status, no other information will be divulged in the study. Transcriptions of the discussion will be made from digital recordings. All materials relating to demographic information and transcription notes will be locked in a filing cabinet and disposed of in an appropriate manner once the study has been concluded. This will happen no later than a year after completion of the study. The data from the study will be shredded in a paper shredder, while the audio recording will be deleted. The principal investigator will have sole access to this information. At all times, strict confidentiality will be a primary concern during the study.

The dated approval stamp on this consent form indicates that this project has been reviewed and approved by the Angelo State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the protection of human subjects in research and research related activities.

Any questions regarding the conduct of the project, questions pertaining to your rights as a research subject, or research-related injury should be brought to the attention of the IRB administrator, Dr. Tay Hack (tay@angelo.edu) TEL: (325) 942-2068, ext. 6121.

Any question about the conduct of this research project should be brought to the attention of the investigator as listed on this form.

_____ _____

Participant Signature Date

_____ _____

Witness Signature Date